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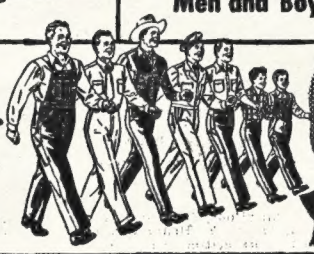

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Adventure

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SEPTEMBER, 1950 **CONTENTS** Vol. 123, No. 5

THE BLACK PEACOCK *(A Novelette)*.....**Lucius A. Daniel** 10
Captain Lenoir was a generous man, for he gave me my choice quite freely: I could either go aboard his foul slave ship as gunner, or rot my life away in a Spanish jail.

THE SWORD OF DON MANUEL.....**Wilbur S. Peacock** 40
It was a brave sword, a proud sword, and along its shining blade ran the stern warning: "Blood Me Not in Dishonor."

NEVER HEARD FROM *(Verse)*.....**P. H. William Bachmann** 50
"Out of the past there floats a ghostly line of ships . . ."

ONE THING A MAN NEVER FORGETS.....**Standby** 52
He may lose track of his own birthday, or his brother's middle name—but there's one little item a man always remembers.

LETTER FROM A BRONC PEELER *(A Fact Feature)*.....**Cull Bertson** 60
Want to learn the easy way to break a colt? Here's how.

BORN TO FIGHT *(A Novelette)*.....**Georges Surdez** 64
When Legion ranks are shattered and tribesmen bar the long way back . . .

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THE RUBBER MONKEY.....**George C. Appell** 84
Liaison Officer Perkins, U.S.A., had strict orders not to interfere, but after meeting the Chinese General he was terribly afraid he'd never get home again.

STRANGE GUEST.....**Browning Norton** 94
Jarm Potter had never seen another dog like the white animal that appeared one day from nowhere—but he figured he must be good for something.

WEAPONS OF THE SAMURAI *(A Fact Story)*.....**Robert H. Rankin** 102
A study of the arms and armor of old Japan.

SALT WATER DUEL.....**John Scott Douglas** 106
When you tangle with the fighting fury of a broadbill swordfish—brother, you're fishing for trouble!

LOST TRAILS.....Where old paths cross 6
THE CAMP-FIRE..... Where readers, writers and adventurers meet 117
ASK ADVENTURE..... Information you can't get elsewhere 120
ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS..... The men who furnish it 123
THE TRAIL AHEAD..... News of next month's issue 122

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Kendall W. Goodwyn, Editor

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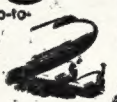

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NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and concerning women are declined as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

I would appreciate hearing from anyone knowing the whereabouts of Ray. L. Edwards serial no. 33538649. We served together in Italy in 1943-44-45 with PWB (OWI). His home state is Virginia. Write Earl Marks, University of Oregon, Cherney Hall, Room 216, Eugene, Oregon.

Would appreciate hearing from any of the U. S. Marines who were members of the First Marine Aviation Force, Northern Bombing Group or the members of the First Marine Aeronautic Company during World War I. The Northern Bombing Group served in France and the First Marine Aeronautic Company did submarine patrol in the Azores Islands. W. P. T. Hill, Major General, U. S. Marine Corps, c/o Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

I would like to locate Samuel Work, the oldest brother of Frank and Albert Work, formerly of Chicago. He could be in the auto or clothing business. Chances are he might be somewhere around Los Angeles, California, or a town nearby. Please forward any information to Monroe Work, 750 South State Street, Elgin, Illinois.

I would like to contact Jerry Gilmore, whom I lost track of about two years ago. He and I both worked at Stockton, California. He lived on the West Coast around Point Arena. Write Earle Donald Fowler, 421 B Street, Hayward, California.

I would appreciate hearing from anyone knowing the whereabouts of T/5 Reinder Kars. Last address, Service Co. 309th Infantry Regt., serial no. 36450114. Previously attached to tank destroyer outfit Camp Hood, Texas. Write Edward Morris, 119 N. Kenilworth Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois.

(Continued on page 8)

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(Continued from page 6)

I am anxious to hear from Pete Burkoski. He was at one time (about 1939) a trainer and handler of elephants for Barnum and Bailey's Circus. About 40 years old, 5′ 6″ tall, husky build. Last heard from in 1941, when he was a patient in a Staten Island Hospital (New York). Write Charles J. Koerner, 10 Castle Creek Road, Binghamton, RD 4, N. Y.

Will any former member of the Adventure Pen Club please write Frank G. Babylon, 2055 Dartmore St., Pittsburgh 10, Penna.

I am trying to find my father, Noble H. McGinnis. When last heard of he was operating a funeral home somewhere in Okla. Pvt. Wm. H. McGinnis, RA 26964691, 111th Engr. Supply Co. Apo 942 c/o PM, Seattle, Washington.

Will anyone knowing George W. Spiegelberg, please ask him to get in touch with me? I think his home is in New York City. Carlos M. Diaz, M. Calle 29th, No. 1809, Chihuahua, Chih, Mexico.

Veterans who served at Dutch Harbor are planning a reunion in Chicago in 1950. We are eager to hear from Naval and Marine personnel who served at N.O.B., N.A.S., and N.A.F. from 1941 to the fall of 1945. Write J. Matthews, 5321 North Ashland, Chicago 40, Ill.

Would appreciate hearing from anyone knowing the whereabouts of Walter Coppinger, stationed in Panama around the time of the first World War He was discharged from the Army at Fort Benning, Georgia. Please notify James Corrigan, 1225 Bloomfield Street, Hoboken, N. J.

Would like information of Army buddies' whereabouts: John Kowal, Hamtramck, Mich.; Harry Gottfriedd, Chicago; John Tyson, N. Y. C. All of the 31st MRC (ETO) last seen in Chantilly. Also Emil de Roseby, 29th Inf. Div., last seen near Frankfurt A/M. Write John F. Laughlin, 4719 N. Cicero Ave., Chicago 30, Ill.

I am trying to locate a friend and Army buddy, Hovey Murphy. Anyone knowing his address would do a great favor by writing Tony T. Perkins, Route No. 8, Box 626, Salem, Oregon.

Would appreciate hearing from or about:—Leo Corns, last heard from in Indianapolis, Ind. 1944, believed in Chicago.—Lt. Wm. Gable, USAAF, 1944, home was in Jay County, Ind.—Pvt. Jas. Martin, last heard from at Wakeman Gen. Hosp., Camp Atterbury, Ind. 1945, home in vicinity of Cincinnati, O., decorator by trade.—George J. Snyder, last address 1122 E. Main Street, Clarksburg, W. Va. 1942—Roscoe Shirley, discharged from Army at Camp Atterbury, Ind. 1944, home vicinity of Grafton, W. Va. Write to George E. Ziegler, R.R. No. 2—Box No. 178 Spencer, Indiana.

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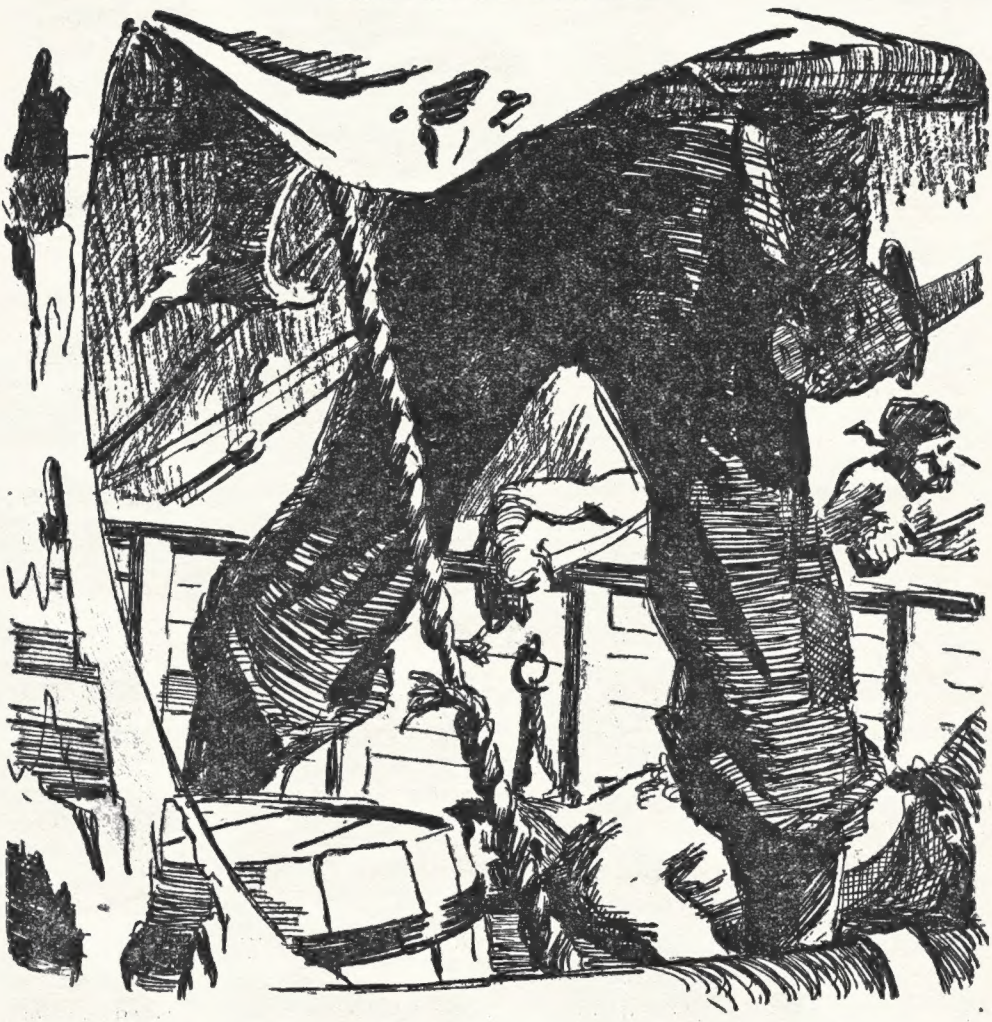
THE BLACK PEACOCK

By

LUCIUS A. DANIEL



SPENT and exhausted, the surf tumbled me onto the beach of San Juan de Puerto Rico. I lay unable to move, half in and half out of the shallows, with every muscle aching and the warm salt foam swirling about my legs. Then I saw the belaying pin still clutched in my right fist, clean and white, all trace of blood washed out by the long swim.

Painfully I dragged myself up onto the dry sand, into the shade of the drying fish nets. On the horizon I could still see the sails of the *Nancy Bedloe*, running out of the harbor for what I hoped would be a

ILLUSTRATED BY
CHARLES GEER

Husain led us in a scrambling rush to the brig's forecastle deck

long stay in the whaling grounds of the northern Pacific.

I had been drunk and drugged, of course, to have ever gone aboard a whaler. And the captain must have been three sheets in the wind himself, to have accepted a real sailor from the Boston crimp. No whaler wants a shellback in the crew, because they refuse to be treated like the hayseeds that usually man whale ships, and they will invariably desert at the first opportunity.

Lazily I watched the *Nancy's* topsails drop under the horizon, leaving only her topgallants in view. She carried no royals or skysails, being a broad-beamed sea

wagon, and scandalously under-rigged, after the fashion of whalers. The burning sunlight sifted through the drying nets and I thought of my introduction to the whaling brig *Nancy Bedloe*. She was out of New Bedford, picking up a crew of crimped men in Boston because her master's reputation had grown too black in his home port.

The morning had been cold and drizzling, beading the rigging with droplets of water. I was lying on the deck, one of a group of sodden bodies still stinking of cheap gin and gutters. A slow and painful consciousness was returning to me when a heavy sea boot crushed into my side and a voice began to bellow like an iceberg splitting.

"Rouse up, you mother's mistakes! Rouse up and haul, you Liverpool sozers! This ain't no bloody pleasure barge or dockside saloon, where shore lice can fatten up and live at ease! Off that deck, or I'll ruin ye for life!"

It was a song I had heard before. I knew that the only way to escape an unmerciful beating was to get on my feet and haul.

Only my sailor's instinct brought me to my feet, and sent me blindly moving in obedience to the orders of the captain. He was almost drowned out by the raging of the hard case mate among the crimped hands. The gaskets had been loosed while the mate and the harpooners drove the landsmen to the capstan with boot and belaying pin.

I knew that to stand idle was to invite a beating, so I shouldered my way into the tangle of bewildered men and began to heave on a capstan bar. The mate and the harpooners and boat-steerers laid on indiscriminately with rope ends and monkey's fists, until the whole crew began to heave.

"Oh, Ranzo loved a captain's daughter," I began to sing, but there were no sailors to pick up the chantey. With no music but blows and curses we heaved up and catted the anchors, tailed onto the halliards, and began to set the sails. Most of this work had to be done by myself and a few old whaling hands, while the mate and his gang drove the crimped men about the decks like cattle, shouting incomprehensible orders and laying about right and left.

The tide moved the heavy brig slowly out, till we heaved on the braces and the sails filled. The *Nancy Bedloe* stood out to sea, running free before the land breeze, with the cold fog all about us and all hell loose amidships.

ONE of the crimped men stood out from his companions, being well dressed, although a little flashy. I had already marked him out as one man who would have grief on this voyage. As soon as the mate gave them an instant to catch their breath, this man stepped over to him and began to speak.

"Look here, mister," he began, in an injured tone, "there has been a very serious mistake made in my case. I—"

The mate's answer had been a wet rope's end across the man's face. He stood there a moment, with the raw red burn of the rope on his mouth. Then, swift and deadly as a barracuda, he snatched a pistol from under his coat. At the same instant a boatsteerer caught him behind the head with a belaying pin, a fine two-handed blow, and he dropped to the deck like a falling spar.

The mate leaned over him and picked up the pistol, a small derringer. Taking a very delicate aim, he fired both barrels through the unconscious man's head. Then he stood up, licking his thick lips and looked coldly at the rest of us.

"Now then," he was almost whispering, his voice cold and deadly, "if there's anybody else who thinks they can start a mutiny on this vessel, speak up."

No one moved. A corner of the foresail flapped twice and then snapped as the wind filled the sail. I could hear the fog dripping from the rigging.

Coldly, slowly, the mate's eyes covered his crew. When he reached my face he began to smile tightly, like a spider looking at a fly.

"A Liverpool packet rat," he said. "We've got no use for your kind on this vessel. A little song bird. If there's anything you don't like, sing out."

I stood quietly, my hands locked behind my back, and looked as coldly at him as he looked at me. I knew that at the slightest sign of either insolence or cowardice he would strike. The corpse lay between us, moving slightly with the roll of the brig, like a man moving in his sleep.

There was a long moment of tenseness that seemed to me like years, and then the mate spoke. "Get this over the side," he said, "and clean up the deck. Remember, I'll keep my eye on you. If you live through this voyage, I can guarantee that you'll never forget it."

The weeks that followed were as good a sample of hell as any man is liable to get this side of the grave. The wind was light and shifting when there was any wind at all. No man had rest, even with a whaler's oversized crew, for both watches were constantly busy at the braces, shifting the set of the sails for every vagrant puff of wind. Also, the mate had determined to drive me to some act which he could interpret as mutiny. I was worked night and day slushing down the mast, cleaning out the pigpen, performing all the menial tasks that are normally the work of the lowest, greenest ordinary seaman on a vessel.

Nevertheless, I held control of my temper and my life, through three and a half weeks of half calms and flighty breezes from Sandy Hook to San Juan de Puerto Rico. Here the captain rode at anchor for three days, for reasons not explained to foremast hands. Naturally, none of us were allowed ashore, and a watch was always kept over us by the trusted members of the ship's company. However, most of us had too healthy a fear of the sharks which infested the bay to try the quarter mile swim to shore. In fact, few of the crew could swim, and only I could swim well.

Although I had less fear of the sharks than the others, the mate gave me no chance to move without his order. I only sat and sweltered, and pounded the anchor in default of real work, sitting in the sun on the topgallant forecastle.

As the tropic sun beat down like a sledge hammer, hatred for the mate boiled up inside me until I was like a fowling piece set with a hair trigger ready to go off at the slightest jostle. The explosion came almost too late for me to escape with my life.

The anchor was catted, all sail set, and the *Nancy* brig was a good mile out from shore, when the mate walked past me and saw the tiny crucifix around my neck. His face became nearly purple with anger as he snarled at me.

"A bloody Papist on the vessel! No wonder we've had calms and head winds that kept us three and a half weeks from Boston to San Juan! You idolatrous Jonah, with an image around your neck. . ."

Those were the last words he ever spoke, for as he wrenched the crucifix from my neck I snatched a white oak belaying pin from the rack behind me and struck him alongside the head, with the full force of an arm that had hauled on brace and halliard and gun tackle for twenty years. His head made a popping sound, as if someone had stepped on an egg, and blood and a little brains ran out as he fell to the deck. In the same motion I turned and slipped over the rail and down into the sea, with the belaying pin still clutched in my fist.

I swam under water until my lungs seemed to be on fire, and then surfaced long enough to gulp a lungful of air and glance at the brig. She stood out for the open sea, and never even lowered a boat to try and capture me.

I surfaced again, and then began to swim toward the mile-distant shore, slowly husbanding what strength I had left . . .

I WAS almost finished when I finally reached the beach and pulled myself up out of the water. The wind stirred the nets above my head, the sun struck down hotly, and the last trace of the *Nancy Bedloe* disappeared over the edge of the world.

I was out of the frying pan straight into the fire. Without money or clothing, I had no choice but to ship out on the first vessel I could find.

Just back of the beach stood the shacks of the poor. It was the district of San Juan known by the ironic name of *La Perla,* the Pearl. Its people were cutthroats and petty thieves, and earned for their district the ripest reputation in the Caribbean.

There would be no help for me here, but if I could make my way to the waterfront I could find some boarding house crimp to take me in till I could find a ship. Of course, he would receive my first month's pay from the captain when he shipped me, but I had to eat—and how else could a seaman get credit?

The afternoon sun made me drowsy as

I rested on the beach, and I decided to put off walking to the waterfront till the cool of the evening. I hollowed out a place in the warm sand, rolled on my side, and dozed off comfortably.

It was already dusk when a man's raucous voice awakened me. A mulatto was sitting in the sand not far away, guzzling rum from a bottle with a broken neck. He was trying to sing a bawdy song in Spanish, and might have succeeded if he could have managed to stay on the same key two notes running.

I had a very empty feeling in my stomach. It was time to start for the waterfront, but the sleep had not yet cleared from my head. Before I moved the mulatto saw me, carefully propped his bottle up in the sand, and stepped cautiously toward me. He evidently thought I still slept, for he bent over me and began to search for pockets in my canvas trousers.

There were none, but he never found it out. I brought my knee up into his

Whipping the belaying pin into my hand, I ran forward silently over the cobblestones.

stomach, and as he fell backwards into the sand I snatched up my belaying pin and brought it down on his head.

This, I considered, gave me full rights in his rum bottle. The first swallow tasted like a rusty cutlass blade, but it numbed me enough to be able to continue. Food was what I needed, but rum was all I had—rum that carried the worst bad luck of any I have ever seen.

Already a little dizzy, I began to pick my way through the huts toward the waterfront. The level of the bottle receded, the level of my spirits rose, and the miserable slums of San Juan became wrapped in a warm golden glow. I paid no attention when the character of the houses began to change, although a respectable neighborhood was usually patrolled by the watch—to whom I would be a barefooted "Yanqui" sailor, who would be sold to a crew-hungry captain.

About this time I discovered that the bottle had become strangely empty. After a few puzzled moments I decided that I must have drunk up all the liquor, and threw the bottle away, striking up "Farewell and goodbye to you, fair Spanish ladies" full voice, in honor of a good friend gone to his rest.

The sentiment was my undoing. I am unfortunately one of those who when drunk feel an overpowering love for humanity—a thing I have lived too long to feel when sober, and able to see my scars. I also have a profound sense of justice, a burning desire to right wrongs, and a habit of trying to acquire other men's women. In plain English, when drunk I have the most suicidal characteristics of the human race.

For as I walked around the corner I saw a well-dressed gentleman fighting with his sword cane, his back to the wall, holding off four ragged, knife-armed assassins. If I had been sober, I would have immediately turned back, having observed that those who interfere in strange feuds seldom live long. In my drunken state I naturally did the opposite. Whipping the belaying pin into my hand, I ran forward silently over the cobblestones. One of the bravos saw me before I reached them, but too late to help himself. I caught him across the top of his head, so that he fell to his hands and knees, dropping his knife. The others turned toward me in surprise, and the gentleman drove his sword cane through the shoulder of the nearest. This left only two to face me, and those without too much courage.

Meanwhile, the one with the wounded shoulder was screaming like a woman, and the man I had struck sat crosslegged on the ground, rocking his head in his hands, cursing in Spanish. I, myself, was roaring "Blow the Man Down" at the top of my voice. Only the strange gentleman and his two remaining assailants made no noise.

Suddenly one of them lifted up his head and yelped *"Los serenos!"* like a frightened pup.

I heard the rush of feet behind me and the voices calling *"Quien vive?"* It was the watch. I whirled to face them as they raced around the corner with bayoneted muskets, but the stranger and the two unwounded attackers disappeared like ghosts.

The watch looked about them. The situation was obvious. A drunken sailor had attacked two poor citizens of San Juan, doubtless intending to rob them. The man with the wounded shoulder explained this volubly to the captain of the watch.

I swung the belaying pin against the bayonet presented to my breast, trying to burst through the men surrounding me, but a musket butt caught me in the small of the back, and as I fell another struck me in the back of my head.

CHAPTER II

SAILOR'S CHOICE

SPEAKING from experience, no jail is pleasant, but least pleasant of all are Spanish jails. Most jails are stone, damp and uncomfortable. But the cell in which I awoke was floored with cobblestones, covered with several inches of water, and stank worse than a slaver's bilges. I had been awakened by the rats gnawing at my bare toes.

I was lying on my back on the cell floor, and the rough stones had eaten their pattern into my flesh. I had not eaten for two days, my back and head were covered with bruises from the beating the watch

had given me while I was unconscious, and my pants and body were covered with slime from the water on the floor. The belaying pin was missing, of course, which left me with a sense of loss.

Hatred of the rats gave me enough strength to pull myself to a sitting position against the wall and strike out at them feebly. Hunger and exhaustion caused strange pictures to float through my mind, so that sometimes the jail cell seemed to be a dream, and the dreams real.

I could see the small, dirty shack in New York city where my seven brothers and I were born. I had been the youngest, and my mother had died at my birth, leaving my father to console himself with the whiskey bottle. My brothers were like my father, but Father Morphy managed to pound reading and writing into my head. This left me with a desire for something better than the slums around Five Points. I ran away to sea when I was ten years old, serving as a powder monkey on the *Constitution* frigate. I doubt if my family ever noticed my absence.

The pictures ran together in my mind, Father Morphy's gentle face superimposed on the gun-deck of the *Constitution,* while the long twenty-fours roared and leaped against the breachings in the fight with the *Java* . . . which was, at the same time, the spar deck of the privateer *Rattlesnake,* and I myself was laying the long nine bowchasers on an escaping prize.

They ran together, all these vessels I had sailed aboard—ships, sloops, brigs, schooners—blending with strange ports in China and India, the forested mouth of the Columbia river, the quiet islands of the South Pacific...

Then I seemed to be high in the rigging of a full-rigged ship off the Cape of Good Hope, losing the skysail in a howling gale. The force of the wind nearly blew me from the yard, and I wondered how the flimsy kite I was setting could hold. Then I saw that we were headed dead into the eye of the wind, and at a spray-drenched ten knots!

"Mary save me," I thought. "I've shipped out on the *Flying Dutchman!*"

I could see the face of the captain, lean and dark and handsome; twisted with fury at the gale . . . He was dressed in a dark coat and tall beaver, and carried an open sword cane in his hand . . . My visions overwhelmed me in a swift black tide, and I slept.

It may have been hours later, or only minutes, when I was awakened by the turnkey rattling at the lock of my cell door. The rats scurried for cover as the heavy door creaked open and the light from his lantern spilled inside. I looked up eagerly, my whole body aching with hunger, but he held no bowl of prison slops. Instead he stepped inside, holding the lantern over me, and motioned a companion to enter.

The other man came gingerly through the door, his nose buried in a scented handkerchief, grimacing as the slimy water lapped about his polished boots. I recognized him with a start. He was the man whom I had helped against the dagger men, and I had seen him as the captain of the "Flying Dutchman" in my dream.

"Aqui esta," said the jailer. *"El ladron Americano."* He spat at me absent-mindedly. *"Este es el hombre que Usted quiere, señor capitan?"*

The other did not answer, but stood there, tapping his cane against his boot, looking at the bearded, red eyed, slime covered man who lay on the stones before him. His eyes were cold and hard as pistol muzzles, and I felt the same chill wind blowing where my stomach should have been that I felt when we cleared for action to fight the *Java.*

His eyes found the tattoo of the *Constitution* on my chest, and rested there.

"You served on the *Constitution?*" he asked. His voice was as cold as his eyes, very formal, with the slow drawl of the South and a trace of foreign accent in it.

"Yes."

"Sir!" His voice snapped like a rifle shot.

"Aye, aye, sir," I answered.

"Are you a gunner?"

"I served as a gun captain on the *Rattlesnake* privateer, and later as a gunnery lieutenant on the same vessel, sir."

He looked at me a moment, unmoving. Then he turned to the turnkey and said, *"El debe a ir conmigo. He dado al gobernador seguridad, que ese hombre no hacere otras crimines."*

"Si, como no? Estoy su servidor, señor capitan."

I was unable to rise without the assistance of the jailer, and he was forced to support me up the flights of stone stairways that led from my dungeon to the sunlight and fresh air. He let us out by a small side door into an alley, and although the sun had already set and the air in the alley was none too fresh, it seemed like the breath of paradise after that cell.

MY LIBERATOR stopped and regarded me, as well he might. I could have been used to frighten children, or exhibited in a sideshow, with my hair and two-day beard matted with filth and blood, and my red veined eyes glaring out between.

"You will have to be washed before you go aboard," he said wrinkling his nose. "Your smell is too much, even for my ship."

"And fed," I added. I didn't understand exactly what was going on. A man whose life I had saved might help me to get out of jail, but what did his vessel have to do with me? Nevertheless, I would need a bath and meal before I would be able to ask any questions, or argue with anyone about shipping on his vessel. But for a man who was grateful for his life, my friend was being remarkably cold-blooded.

A carriage was waiting at the entrance of the alley, and I relaxed gratefully on the leather cushions, careless of how I fouled them. We rattled through the dark streets, while my companion sat on the seat facing me, nose in handkerchief, until we pulled up at the door of a stone house built in the Spanish style.

Dazed from hunger and exhaustion, I moved without thinking out of the carriage and into the house, where servants carried me off to be bathed and dressed in clean sailor's clothing. Then they took me to the kitchen, where I sat with the servants at the supper table and ate myself into a stupor.

I was evidently the guest of a man whose life I had helped to save, and whose actions could be interpreted as those of gratitude. Yet neither by look nor word had he shown that he felt such an emotion. In fact, I had a feeling that he was a man incapable of any human warmth.

Most important of all, his first question had been to ask if I was a trained gunner —and he spoke of taking me aboard his vessel as if I had already signed articles. Of course, gunners were valuable in the Caribbean in 1825. The islands were infested with picaroons, who would spring out in canoes and boats upon any vessel which sailed close enough, and the revolutions against Spain had produced a crop of "privateers" who used letters of marque from fictitious governments to cast a shadow of legality over plain piracy.

But though this man might well be a simple merchant, to whom a trained gunner meant better protection for his cargoes, he might also be a pirate or a slaver, hunted by every warship in the Caribbean or the Middle Passage.

Also, he had told the jailer in Spanish that he had given the Governor security that I would commit no more crimes. Yet, if he was on terms of intimacy with the Governor, why didn't he explain to him that there had been no crime on my part, and have me released and his attackers arrested?

Just as my thoughts reached this point a servant told me that his master was waiting for me at the outer door, and that I must hurry. Still puzzling out the problems in my mind, I rose and followed him through the patio to where this strange and mysterious gentleman stood waiting by the street door. The flickering lanterns of the servants threw shifting patterns of light and shadow over his polished boots, skin tight breeches, dark blue coat and tall hat—but now for the first time I saw his face clearly, neither hidden by night nor obscured by delirium.

It was long and lean, with high cheek bones and a delicate, high arched nose—yet not gaunt. In fact, with his dark olive skin and cold gray eyes, he must have been an extremely handsome and aristocratic man. For myself, I could never forget his eyes and the stiff, frozen mask of his face.

I stood there for a moment, and he motioned abruptly for me to go through the door. I did not move.

"I would like to ask you some questions, sir." I said this politely enough,

but I had no intention of acting further until I knew what I was doing.

"Yes?" His eyes narrowed slightly, like a cat about to pounce.

"Where do you intend to take me?"

"To my schooner. We will set sail with the morning tide."

"And suppose I don't want to ship aboard your schooner?" This man's calm acceptance of myself as one who could be ordered like a slave, to whom explanations were unnecessary, had roused my Irish blood, and I found myself wishing for that fine white oak belaying pin.

"I will be very generous with you." He smiled thinly. "I will give you a free choice. You may either sail with me or return to the *carcel.*"

That threw me flat aback. There was small choice there, between taking a berth on a schooner, occupation unknown, and rotting my life away in a Spanish jail. Now I understood why he had used that particular method of having me released. The charges against me had not been dropped—I had only been released in his custody. And he might return me at any time.

"Aye, aye, sir," I answered. "We sail at dawn."

"Ah." He smiled the same cold smile. "Now that you know your master, you should learn your master's name. I am Captain Lenoir—a gentleman of New Orleans, you understand—whom you should be honored to have for your captain, instead of ill-bred Yankees."

He turned abruptly, out into the street, and I followed without a word. Still, I wondered why he should try to impress me with his birth or breeding, since he obviously considered me to be less than a dog in rank.

I pulled at the oars of a small skiff while Captain Lenoir rode in the bows, directing me through the maze of shipping to where his schooner lay. The moon had set, and we could hear the small noises of ships riding at anchor, the lap of water on their sides, and the creak of plank and cordage as they lifted slowly to the swell, even before we could see their dark hulls loom above us. Slowly we threaded our way past hulls and dripping anchor chains toward the schooner I would be forced to help sail. Though my back was turned, I knew her occupation before the skiff ever so much as touched her side.

I knew it by the stench, dark, dank and awful, so heavy that you could cut it with a knife, yet sharp and piercing as a cutlass. I was shanghaied on a slaver.

CHAPTER III

HELL SHIP

I AWOKE in the stinking darkness of the forecastle with a heavy hand on my shoulder. I was lying in a narrow, filthy bunk, jammed in the bows of the schooner, and looking up into the face of the ugliest Negro I had ever seen. His hair grew long and bushy, like the natives I had seen in the New Hebrides and the Solomons, and was tied into bunches with red ribbons. His face, however, lacked the flat nose and heavy lips of other Negroes I had seen before. In fact, it would have been handsome, had it not been horribly scarred by smallpox, and his whole face looked like that of a demon seen in a nightmare. His teeth were filed to sharp points, after the fashion of cannibal tribes, and a naturally cruel expression leered through the pitted scars. Heavy brass earrings had stretched the lobes of his ears until the rings brushed his shoulders as he moved.

In fact, as he shook me awake I had a sudden pang of fear that I was dead and gone to Hell unshriven, my soul so heavy with sins that it had dropped like a dipsy lead down to the lowest soundings of the Inferno, and the demons had come to escort me to eternal torment.

"Captain say you come, right now!" he said, and turning led the way through the narrow hatchway to the upper deck. On deck the sun was already beating down so that I could feel the hot tar in the deck seams underfoot, and the fresh trade wind mercifully cut the stench of the ship from my nostrils. The few hours' sleep I had gained had taken the soreness from my body and the rum from my head, so that I felt fairly well for the first time since my long swim to the beach.

Captain Lenoir stood by the tiller abaft the cabin trunk, immaculately dressed, with his tall white beaver on his head and the light sword cane held delicately in his hand. Beside him stood a thin young

man, untidily dressed, with a number of papers spread out on the cabin trunk weighted down with a boarding pistol.

I touched my forehead to Captain Lenoir and stood waiting. The young man looked up at me, pale blue eyes staring nervously through the strands of blond hair that fell over his forehead. He reminded me of a rat caught looting the bread locker, backed into a corner and ready to fight or run.

"Mister Fox will be the first officer of this vessel," said the captain, in his formal, expressionless voice. "He has the articles here for you to sign. The second mate is Husain, who brought you on deck. You will obey their orders as if they were my own. Any sign of disobedience will be punished both quickly and efficiently."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Touch the pen," said Mr. Fox, motioning toward the papers. "What is your name?"

"Patrick Regan, sir."

Then, while I touched the pen with my finger he wrote my name at the bottom of the ship's articles, a job I could have performed myself if he had thought to ask me. Still, there are few enough seamen who can read and write.

"You've signed on as quarter gunner, Regan," the mate continued. "See that the gun and its tackle are kept up properly. We'll probably need them before—"

"Mister Fox!" The captain's voice cracked like a whiplash, so that the mate jumped and shot a frightened look at him. "Lay forward there, Regan!"

I did so on the run. Whatever the mysterious Captain Lenoir might be, he was certainly a man whose orders were meant to be obeyed. I sat down on the cargo hatch amidships, and for the first time was able to look about me.

Like most slave ships, the vessel was a fore and main topsail schooner. That is, she was schooner rigged with squaresails on both topmasts above the fore and aft sails, a rig which combined the sail area of a brig with the weatherly qualities of a schooner. Her hull was obviously Baltimore built, with a razor sharp bow and a long, graceful run showing the speed without which no slaver would dare to put to sea. For those who did not know her type she might seem scandalously overrigged, but I knew her sharply raking masts would carry her mass of sail in almost any weather.

She was small, as all slavers were, barely eighty feet from stem to stern, but nearly two hundred slaves could be packed beneath her deck in the tiny, airless hold. Though half her cargo died en route, as they probably would, she would make her owners' fortune if she brought the rest to the lonesome inlets of the Florida coast, from where they could be smuggled to the slave markets.

I turned my attention to her single gun, mounted on a pivot just abaft the foremast. It was an eighteen pounder long gun, much heavier metal than slave ships usually carried. A few slavers had tried to carry heavy batteries and large crews to fight them, but the results of their encounters with the British and American patrol vessels decided the rest to trust to their speed to escape from men-of-war, and the single gun they carried was to overawe African chieftains and discourage pirates. Generally these guns were carronades of heavy caliber but short range, and a heavy long gun was rarely seen.

The gun carriage was mounted on a long slide, one end of which rested on a stout pivot, while the other end slid on a circular copper track, so that the gun could be trained in any direction. The carriage raised the gun above the level of the bulwarks, about three and a half feet, so that no gun ports were necessary.

My study of the schooner was suddenly interrupted by two large boats which ran alongside with considerable noise and mismanagement. Sixteen of the finest candidates for the hangman's noose I had seen in a long life at sea clambered onto the schooner's deck, still drunk and noisy. They were met by the huge Negro, Husain, who had awakened me. Two open-handed blows knocked the noisiest of the seamen into the scuppers, and effectively frightened the rest into silence. One of them a squat, broad shouldered Portuguese, wearing a red stocking cap, tossed some money to the crew of the boat alongside, cursed them in a mixture of Spanish and Portuguese, and ordered them to shove off.

Captain Lenoir had ignored the arrival of his crew, speaking quietly to Mr. Fox,

but now he raised his voice to Husain.

"Heave up the anchor, Husain!"

I joined the rest of the crew in their rush forward to the capstan, took hold of a bar, and began to heave.

"Anchor up and down, sir!" called Husain.

"Break it out!"

Quickly we heaved up and catted the anchor, tailed onto the halliards, and ran up the fore and main sails. Two men raced up the ratlines to clear the gaskets, and we set the topsails and headsails in rapid succession. Her yards squared to the fair trade wind with all sail set, the schooner stood out of the harbor of San Juan and into the Caribbean sea.

"Larboard watch go below!" bellowed Husain, and motioned me to join them. I was standing in the bows and took a quick glance over the side to learn the name of the schooner.

Her name was the *Black Peacock,* and no home port was listed.

LIKE most vessels, the *Black Peacock* had all the virtues the men who sailed her lacked. She answered her tiller like an eager, well-trained horse answers the rein, heeled to the pressure of the wind and slipped through the water with speed and grace, like a playful dolphin. She was a thing of grace and beauty, and if her planks stank with the smell of rotten humanity, the fault was not hers but of the men who owned her.

It was my off watch, and I stood leaning on the bulwarks, watching the flying fish flash up from the schooner's bow wave, glassy eyed with fright. For the hundredth time my mind was considering the many mysteries that sailed aboard the *Black Peacock,* and finding no solution.

First came that strange cold man, Lenoir. Always dressed in the model of fashion, he walked the afterdeck in gloves and white top hat, swinging his sword cane elegantly, and seeming completely to ignore all other human beings on board, with the exception of Mr. Fox and the huge Husain. Yet the crew lived in terror of him, though he never acknowledged their existence. Mr. Fox became visibly more nervous in his presence, and Husain seemed to regard him with the awe that other Negroes reserve for the servants of Damballa, the serpent god. The crew told me that Husain came from the desert south of Egypt, and was nominally a Mohammedan.

Lenoir's lack of gratitude to a man who had saved his life was not the only contradiction to normal behavior in his actions. His unbending affectation of aristocracy and superiority was strange even in a creole gentleman—and what was a creole gentleman doing as captain of a slave ship? And last, but most strange of all, why should he set a course for the coast of Florida with an empty hold?

How a man as fearful as Mr. Fox could enter the dangers of the slave trade was a thing I could not understand. A perfect contrast to Lenoir, with his untidy clothes and his straggling hair, he obviously walked in fear of him on the one hand and of Husain on the other.

Husain was openly contemptuous of his superior, treating him with insolence whenever the captain was below. Toward the crew, who would have murdered him at the first opportunity, he turned a face of unwavering hatred, hazing them unmercifully. He fawned on Captain Lenoir like a dog, yet the captain carefully omitted the formal Mister his position warranted.

For myself, I had lived too long at sea to let uncertain future weigh me down unnecessarily, yet my mind was continually turning over plans of escape once we should reach some piece of land, even into the arms of African cannibals.

CHAPTER IV

BLOODY DECKS

"ON DECK!" After four days of running before the northeast trades, the lookout on the fore uppertopsail yard had finally come to life.

"Hello!" Mr. Fox answered the lookout's hail, his voice quivering with excitement.

"Sail on the horizon, about ten points off the starboard bow!"

"Keep your eye on her," cried Mr. Fox, and dashed down the companionway into the main cabin. Almost immediately he reappeared followed by Captain Lenoir,

outwardly calm, but obviously tense with excitement.

He moved like a startled cat into the main rigging and up to the uppertopsail yard, his glass under his arm, and there he leveled it on the strange sail. Without waiting to return to the deck he called down to Mr. Fox, "Call all hands and clear for action! It's the *Hannibal,* with her bottom foul with weed, just as Enoch said!"

I was already on my feet and moving before the order could be relayed. My gun crew, whose duties had been painfully drilled into them in the past few days, ran to their places, while others ran for the powder. We were casting off the tompion and touch hole plug when Lenoir's voice snapped beside me.

"Regan! Load with dismantling shot and clear away her rigging. If one shot strikes her hull and damages her cargo your back will pay for it. When she lies helpless you may expect further orders."

As he turned to go he added in a low voice, "If your name as a gunner is undeserved, I will make you wish you were back in the San Juan jail."

The chase was now well over the horizon, her topsails gleaming white. She had changed her course, and lay on the port tack, heading away from us, but we were overhauling her rapidly. Her bottom must have been a marine hayfield, for her raking masts showed her to be built for speed.

The eighteen pounder was cleared for action, loaded with dismantling shot—that is, with an iron ring to which were fastened eight foot lengths of chain, so that when fired into the enemy's rigging it would whirl through in a sixteen-foot pinwheel, parting ropes and slashing sails to ribbons. Beside the gun sprawled its crew, among the rammers, pails, and ladles, talking quietly among themselves.

I stood a little apart, as a petty officer should, and listened to the rigging creak as the deck rolled gently under my feet. It was the only sound I could hear. Yet I knew that in a moment I would be toiling in acrid powder smoke, my ears ringing to the crash of the gun, while flying iron ripped the deck beneath me into splinters more dangerous than the enemy shot itself.

oh-oh, Dry Scalp!

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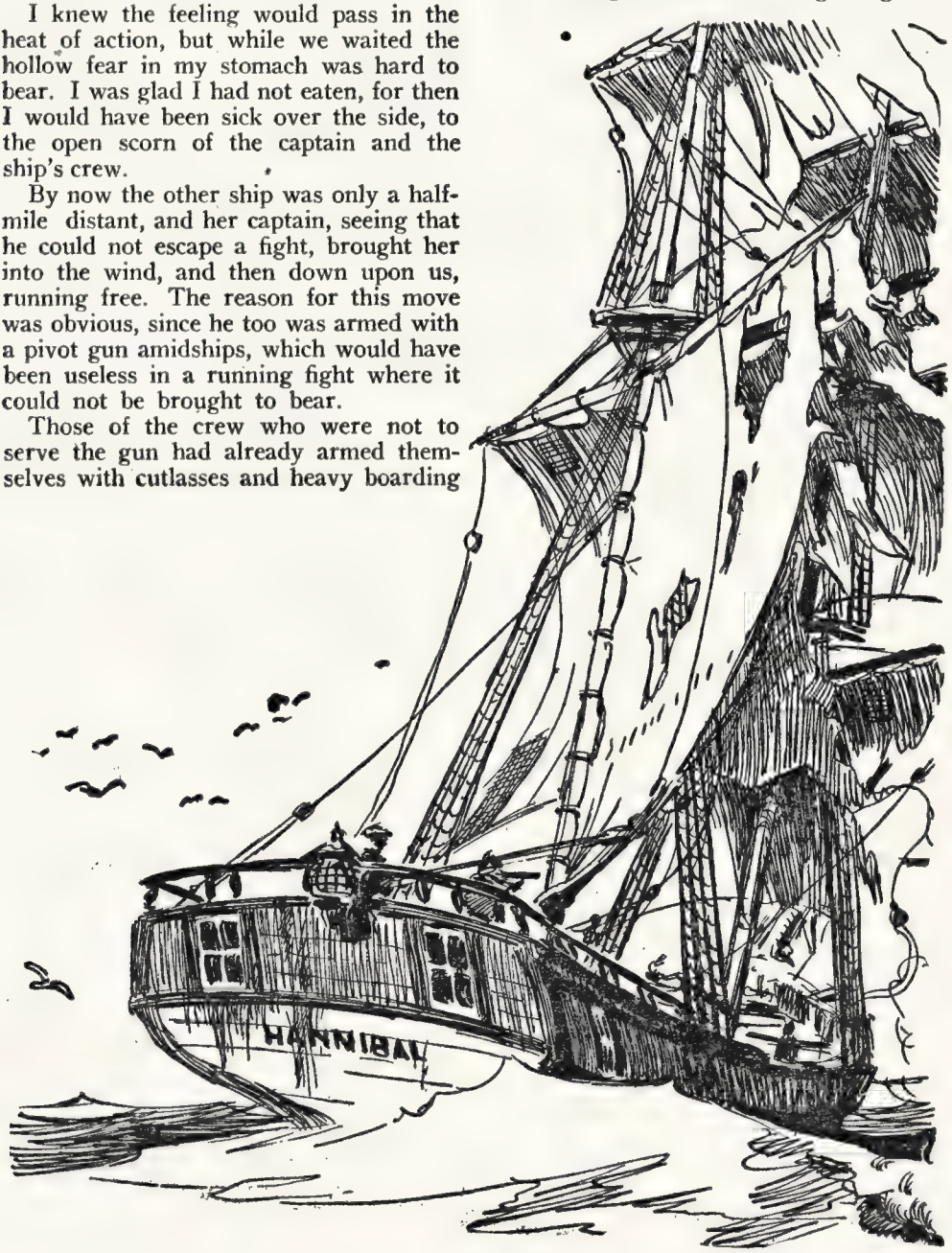
The old, sick fear took me by the throat and ran in waves over my body. I remembered the *Constitution's* gun deck red with the blood it had been painted red to hide, the captain of the *Rattlesnake* with spurting arteries where his head should have been, the shattered wreck of the *Bristol Merchant* sinking before my eyes while her wounded screamed.

I knew the feeling would pass in the heat of action, but while we waited the hollow fear in my stomach was hard to bear. I was glad I had not eaten, for then I would have been sick over the side, to the open scorn of the captain and the ship's crew.

By now the other ship was only a half-mile distant, and her captain, seeing that he could not escape a fight, brought her into the wind, and then down upon us, running free. The reason for this move was obvious, since he too was armed with a pivot gun amidships, which would have been useless in a running fight where it could not be brought to bear.

Those of the crew who were not to serve the gun had already armed themselves with cutlasses and heavy boarding pistols. The Negro mate had taken the tiller, a long cross-hilted sword slung over his shoulder. No one moved but Captain Lenoir, who walked like a fashion plate by the weather rail, gracefully swinging his cane.

"Train your gun to larboard!" he snapped. As my gun crew sweated at the training tackles, the strange brig bore



down on us on a course that would obviously cross our bows. I could see a knot of men amidships, clustered about what looked like a thirty-two pounder carronade. A charge of grape or canister from that monster, raking the length of our vessel, could leave more than half our crew screaming on the deck.

"Stand by to go about!" The captain's voice was like a whip. The hands leaped to man the sheets and braces. The brig was only two hundred yards distant, spray flashing at her bows and all sail set and straining.

"Let go and haul!" Up we came into the wind, and hung there in stays, our canvas crackling like musket shots. The schooner bucked like a mishandled stallion, slammed her bows into the waves.

The brig's yards jerked around as she changed to a broad reach across the wind. She would rake us as we hung there helplessly.

As the smoke of the discharge cleared away, I saw the brig again, sliding astern of us.

At the last possible moment, Lenoir's voice snapped again. Our head swung, first slowly, then with a jerk as our sails filled.

It was too late for the brig to help herself. As we shot forward across her course only a few short yards separated the two vessels.

"Fire as your gun bears!"

I crouched tensely over the breech of the eighteen pounder, sighting down the long barrel. My mind was closed to everything but what lay before the muzzle—a patch of blue sky—then wave crests, as the ship rolled—the black hull of the brig began to slide into view.

The gun crashed against the breeching tackle, its smoke choked and blinded me . . . and then, as the smoke of the discharge cleared away, I saw the brig again, sliding astern of us.

The whirling chains had swept away her sails and forestays, so that her long jib boom quivered alarmingly. Without the balancing pressure of her jibs she snapped up into the wind, every sail caught flat aback. . . .and the forestays, which should have supported the foremast against the pressure of the wind, trailed uselessly from the bowsprit into the ocean.

Even as I watched, her foremast began to whip back and forth, cracked like a gunshot, and broke off at the base of the foretopmast, pulling the maintopgallant after it as it plunged back onto the deck of the brig. What had been a full-rigged brig, lovely and dangerous, had been changed in a few breaths to an ugly, helpless wreck, sagging off to leeward like an empty bucket.

"Load with round shot, Regan."

Lenoir still walked elegantly by the weather rail. His voice had lost its tenseness, was once more cold and distant.

"I want that mainmast down. Any shot that strikes her hull will cost you twenty strokes of the cat."

THE schooner came around before the wind, back toward the wallowing brig. The gun crew sweated with gun swab and rammer, shoving powder, shot, and wadding home down the long gun barrel. I felt weak as a kitten from relief, but I knew the fight was far from finished.

Only the rigging of the brig had been damaged. The falling masts had probably injured some of her crew, but the rest were hacking the tangled ropes apart, to clear her deck of wreckage and leave the carronade free for use. Why Lenoir should want the last of her rigging destroyed I could not understand, since she already lay helpless to maneuver. A few rounds of grape would disable her crew . . . but he seemed to fear damage to her hull as much as if he walked her quarterdeck himself.

When we were within pistol shot of the injured brig we came up across her bows, taking a few wild musket shots from her crew. I fired on the up roll, against all of my training—twenty strokes of the cat are no joke, and the down roll of the schooner might send the shot into the brig's hull.

The ball whistled wide and free, a clear miss, and we had to come about on the other tack to make another pass. Naval gunnery is an art, not a science like the firing of land batteries. The gunner must not only consider the pitch, roll, and speed of two separate vessels; but must be able to predict their changes in the split seconds between the decision to fire and his leap away from the breech of the gun to pull the lanyard or apply the match.

Consequently, we spent two weary hours sweating at gun and brace before a lucky round sent the brig's mainmast splashing into the sea. Two men had been slightly wounded by musketry from the brig's bow, but musketry is even more chancy than gunnery at sea, and most of their shots whistled harmlessly through our rigging.

Lenoir had become progressively less elegant through the two hours. His steps shortened, his heels cracked on the deck, and he looked more and more grimly at my back. When the final shot went home his expression did not change, but settled on the brig in a way that should have burnt it to the water line.

"Husain!" he barked. "Prepare to board."

Husain grinned till every sharp-filed tooth lay bare.

"Aye, aye, sir!" he answered, and turned the tiller over to Mr. Fox, who had shaken as if fever-ridden all through the

fight, useless as an old woman. I snatched up my cutlass from the deck and ran to join the boarding crew clustered by the foremast. I have small stomach for hand to hand fighting, having seen too much for my soul's good, but I felt that an instant's wavering might cost me my life on this vessel.

The schooner had come about and was once more bearing down on the brig's defenseless bow. Her bowsprit had snapped off short from the weight of the tattered headsails, and Mr. Fox laid our course so as to strike it with our lee bow. Husain himself stood at our rail at the point where we would strike, grinning like a barracuda, his long, two-handed sword gripped tightly. The rest of us grouped closely behind him, faces tight and drawn.

The two vessels crashed together, the shock almost driving me from my feet. Even as they met the enemy fired a volley into our boarders, but Husain led us in a scrambling rush to the brig's forecastle deck. The hilt of my cutlass was already clammy with sweat as I followed his huge black shape that slashed with both hands at the musketeers who had fired on us.

There were only four, and Husain left them sprawled and bloody on the deck before we could come up with him. He led us charging around the stump of the foremast and down into the waist of the brig.

There was a stunning blast of sound. The brig's captain had trained the thirty pounder carronade directly forward, loaded with canister, and we had charged full into thirty-two pounds of musket balls fired into our faces. I had come around the foremast at the rear of the group, next to the rail, having no mind to get killed fighting for Lenoir, and so had missed death by a whisker. The rest of the boarding party had been blown into a bloody mess heaped on the brig's forecastle.

All but one. Though my ears were still ringing with the crash of the heavy carronade I could hear a wild yell where the powder smoke hung about the gun. *"Din! Din! Muhammed Din! Ullahu Akhbar!"*

There stood Husain, a black colossus astride the headless corpse of the gunner who had fired the carronade, swinging his great sword like a scythe. Without

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thinking I caught up my cutlass and dashed forward to cut off the men who were spreading around his flank. One I dropped before he saw me with an overhand slash where neck and shoulder met. The others fell back in momentary surprise.

As the trade wind blew the smoke clear of the vessel I could see that only eight men faced us. Half of their crew must have been out of action. Small help to us, I thought, two men against eight . . . shark meat for you, Patrick Regan, and down to Hell unshriven like your dream in San Juan jail . . .

"Up and at 'em!" screamed a voice from the men who faced us. It was from a short, fat man who held himself back from the fighting—his face white with fear and black with powder smoke till he looked more like a coach dog than a man.

"There's only two of them left, and worth a pound apiece to the man who cuts them down!"

They came down on us again, but they kept wide of Husain's blade and bore down most heavily on me—and though they got in their own way at close quarters, I knew I had only moments to live.

Husain got one man who stepped in too close, but all I collected were three flesh wounds about my chest, and I was busily commending my soul to God when something crashed into the side of the brig and feet came rushing across the deck, charging into the backs of the men I fought.

IT WAS all over. Lenoir had not made the schooner fast when my party boarded the brig, and when the carronades' blast nearly wiped us out he brought the schooner down on the brig's side and led the rest of his crew in a charge that finished the fight in a moment.

Husain and I leaned weakly on the carronade and looked about us. Of the brig's crew only four were still on their feet, among them the fat man who had offered a full pound for my life. Lenoir leaned on his cane, tall white beaver cocked at a dashing angle, and regarded them bleakly. The brig's deck was strewn with the dead and dying.

Lenoir gave a curt order to one of his crew, an ugly Portuguese with a long knife. The Portuguese proceeded to cut the throats of the wounded, friend and enemy, with neatness and effiency, so that my dry stomach heaved against my ribs.

"Give me the keys to the chains, Ambridge, and I think I may be so kind as to let you live." Lenoir almost purred as he spoke to the fat man. "You may even be able to work your brig back to port before your water runs out. After all, I am a gentleman, and have no love for vulgar torture."

Under my feet I heard the wailing of muffled voices, and I realized what I should have known before. The ship we had captured was another slaver, on her passage back from the African coast, and Lenoir had a cargo for himself without a long voyage or the expense of gold, costing only the lives of a few worthless sailors.

He must have planned it so. His desire for a good gunner, and his statement that he had received information about the brig, showed that he must have had both method and victim selected beforehand.

He had hated damage to the hull of the brig because it might have cost him the profit of the sale of a few more slaves to the Florida smugglers. He had ordered the boarding party rather than rake the brig for the same reason, although he knew it would cost the lives of many of his crew.

Quite a gentleman, Captain Lenoir.

He gave a quick glance at Husain and myself.

"I should have known you couldn't handle a simple boarding party," he snapped to Husain. "And now both of you are too stove up to help transfer the blacks to the *Black Peacock* . . . Regan, you've earned a flogging for your incompetent gunnery, and I shall see that you get it. Go aboard the schooner, both of you, and patch yourselves up. I'll want you later."

From what I could see, Husain must have been carrying at least five canister shot in him, and was weak from loss of blood besides. But with my weak support we managed to clamber over the bulwarks to our own vessel. He took me to the after cabin with him so that we could bandage

each other's wounds as best we might.

Husain's right leg and side had been horribly torn, but none of the balls had lodged in his body. That made it possible for me to bandage him without necessity for forecastle surgery, and my own wounds were only scratches. The only reason Husain had lived at all was that he was almost at the muzzle of the brig's carronade, and a little to one side, when it was fired, so that the charge had hardly had time to scatter.

We were still at our rough bandaging when a yell cut short the bustle of transferring slaves on the deck above. Lenoir's voice cracked like a whip, and the rattling of chain and the clang of hammers began again with added speed.

Husain and I hurried on deck. I hardly had my head out of the companionway when Lenoir called to me.

"Regan! See that your gun is cleaned and reloaded! Take two of these men to help you. I believe your old gun crew is all dead." He waved his hand at several sailors, who stood, musket in hand, guarding the slaves as they were hurried across the decks of the two vessels into the schooner's hatchway. I could hear the blacksmith's hammer going below, as he riveted them into their chains.

I crimped two of the amateur marines, and began to explain to them the method of sponging and loading a gun, with words of one syllable and a rope's end. For nearly an hour I hardly had time to look about me, until I heard a lookout call from the schooner's main upper topsail yard.

"On deck! I can see her hull on the horizon!"

"What is she?" cried Mr. Fox from the deck.

"A Revenue Marine cutter from the cut of her sails! She should be up with us in an hour!"

It had been the first sighting of her sails that had stopped the work while Husain and I were below. Excitement spread through my weary nerves like boarding house grog. If the cutter should take the *Black Peacock* Lenoir would swing higher than Haman for slavery and piracy on the high seas, and I would be freed . . .

I would not be freed. I was a member of the *Peacock's* crew, and no hard-case Revenue Marine captain this side of Peter's gate would believe I was a crimped man. And Lenoir would probably not hang. However much that same hard-case captain might want to see Lenoir's corpse at his yardarm, he must take him to trial in the States, though he had caught him in the very act of piracy and slave running. And nine slavers out of ten, with money and influence behind them, walked scot free out of these trials.

The captains, that is, not the crews. I would be likely to rot in jail forever on one pretext or another . . . If that was only a British vessel, now, Lenoir would swing fast enough—and myself along with him.

My excitement vanished, and was replaced by a cold round shot of fear in my stomach. Even if we reached the coast of Florida I could only escape to the tender mercies of the Seminoles, but with this "rescuer" I was faced with the alternative of the jail or the gibbet.

While I worked at the gun the *Hannibal's* cargo had all been transferred to the schooner's hold, and even as the lookout spoke, seamen were hurrying to cast off the lashings that bound us to the brig. Chase, fight, and transfer had taken many hours. Already the swift, subtropical change from day to night had begun. Long before the cutter could come up with us we would be hurrying lightless and untraceable through the night toward the thousand inlets of the Florida coast.

Captain Lenoir gave crisp orders, and the sails were set and sheeted home by the remnant of his crew. The hulk of the brig fell rapidly astern in the failing light, the unceasing trade wind filled our sails, and we squared away, running free into the night.

CHAPTER V

A GLASS OF PORT

"NINE feet!" The leadsman swung his lead in a singing arc around his head and sent it flying ahead of the schooner's bows.

"Eight and a half!"

We were creeping around the southern

tip of Key Biscayne into Biscayne Bay, on the southeastern coast of Florida, five hundred miles south of the nearest port at the mouth of the St. Johns river. Close in to the mangrove tangle of the key's shore lay another schooner, swinging at anchor.

We were feeling out the uncharted channel through the jagged coral that skirts this part of the Florida coast and swings far out into the sea to form the Florida keys. Lying behind the mangroves of Cape Florida we would be safe from curious Navy brigs and Revenue cutters. Here we could transfer our cargo to the waiting smuggler in safety, and then sneak out to the high seas, to San Juan or Havana to make arrangements for another voyage.

"Eight feet!"

"Back the foretopsails!" called Captain Lenoir. "Let go the anchor!"

The waiting seaman by the anchor knocked out the chocks, and it splashed down into the crystal water, rattling its chain behind it. The *Black Peacock* swung gently against her hawser, lost her way, and ceased to move over the bottom. Seamen hauled taut on clew and buntline and scrambled into the rigging to furl the sails.

From the strange schooner came a long hail.

"What ship?"

"The *Black Peacock,* out of New Orleans."

There were a few moments of silence. Then the stranger hailed again.

"Would the Captain be so kind as to accept a glass of port in my cabin?"

Lenoir himself answered this hail. "An honor, sir."

The lashings were cleared from the dinghy, and it was quickly hoisted over the side. Lenoir disappeared into the main cabin, to return dressed even more finely than usual. He wore a spotless beaver and an elaborate waistcoat, but the final touch was the complicated cravat about his neck, every fold just so.

"Regan!" he called. "Take the oars. Mr. Fox, you will be in charge of this vessel. Keep the crew on deck and under arms. *Do not* obey any orders from me unless I am standing on this deck. Do you understand?"

"I—I don't quite—"

"That's enough! . . . Husain, did you hear what I just said?"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Be so kind as to explain it to Mr. Fox."

He gestured at me impatiently, and I scrambled over the side and down into the dinghy. Lenoir followed me closely. I pushed off from the side of the schooner with one oar, and then began to row toward the stranger. Lenoir reached into his coat and brought out a small, double-barreled derringer; leaned forward, and dropped it down the neck of the loose calico shirt I wore.

"Arrange that so that you can get it in a hurry," he said. "I have brought you with me for two reasons. One is that I do not trust you out of my sight. The other is that you seem fairly useful to me in emergencies. If I have the slightest feeling that you are contemplating any action contrary to my wishes while aboard this vessel, you will cease to live. If you conduct yourself well, I may forget some part of that flogging you have earned."

I looked about me as I rowed. There was still no chance of escape. The shore of the key, though close at hand, was nothing but a death trap of tangled mangrove, impassable to a human being. It undoubtedly held hungry alligators—perhaps even one of the deadly salt water crocodiles that live in the bays on the southern tip of Florida. The mainland was a low green line three miles across the bay. A long swim, with plenty of hungry barracuda for company . . . and nothing but jungle and Seminole Indians when I got there. Besides, Lenoir could probably shoot me before I left the boat.

The dinghy bumped against the side of the strange schooner. I could see her name written on her bows, the *Charlotte Amalie,* of Pensacola, Florida. She was built on the same rakish model as the *Black Peacock,* and her smell told that she followed the same trade.

She had lowered a short Jacob's ladder over the side for the use of Lenoir, and I followed him up onto her deck. As I went up the ladder I felt the derringer slide beneath my shirt, and with one hand pushed the muzzle into the waistband of my trousers near the opening of my shirt.

THE officers of the *Charlotte* stood on the afterdeck, under a striped awning that had been rigged up against the sun. As Lenoir reached the deck one of them stepped forward with an elegant bow.

"Captain . . . ?"

"Lenoir."

"Permit me to introduce myself. I am Captain Beaumont Stephens, at your service, sir. This is my first officer, Mr. Patterson," he said, indicating a tall blond man beside him. A sallow, dark-haired man, of dapper dress stood slightly behind Mr. Patterson. "My supercargo, Mr. De Verviers . . . Captain Lenoir, gentlemen.

"Now if you would be so kind as to step below . . ."

He turned to me and gave a curt nod toward the forward part of the vessel. Lenoir looked at me absently, rapped twice with his cane on the cabin skylight, and entered the companionway with the other officers.

I settled myself carefully on the cabin trunk next to the skylight, and pretended to fall asleep. My head lay in the shadow of the main boom, so that I could not be seen from the cabin, yet could observe the after part of it easily. The glass had been raised to allow as much wind as possible into the stuffy cabin, and I could hear the tinkle of glass and bottle neck as Captain Stephens poured out his port.

"Your very good health, gentlemen."

In the part of the cabin which I could see, sat Lenoir and the *Charlotte's* mate, Patterson, puffing on long cigars. On the other side of the cabin table sat Captain Stephens and Mr. De Verviers. They drank casually, stiff and formal as two strange dogs making up their minds to fight.

"Did you say that you came from New Orleans, Captain Lenoir? Then you should have much in common with my supercargo. Mr. De Verviers left that city only a short time ago."

Lenoir's lips tightened.

"It has been a long time since I was in New Orleans. I doubt that we would have even acquaintances in common."

Mr. De Verviers looked at him carefully. "It is strange. I find your face very familiar . . . still, your name . . ."

"No matter," Captain Stephens broke in. "Tell me, Captain Lenoir, what business do you find in Biscayne Bay?"

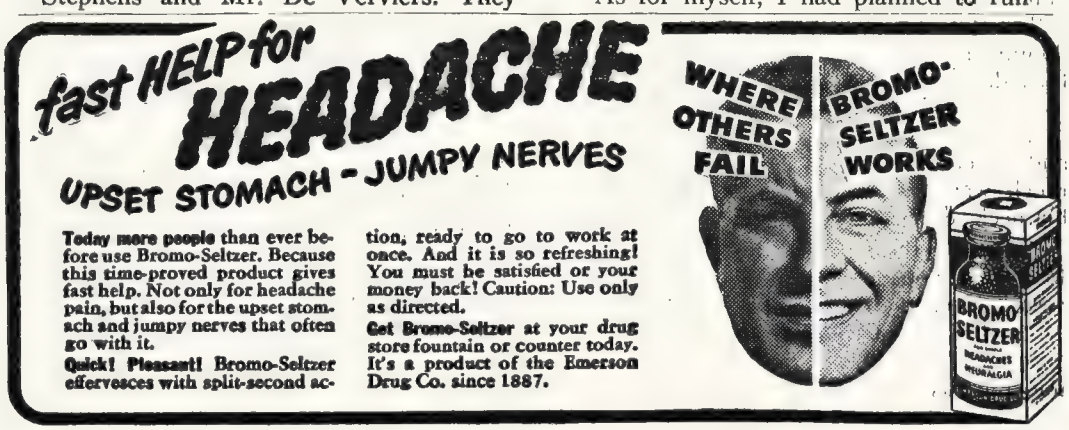
"I do not think we need to pretend with one another. I was chased by a Revenue cutter last evening, and ran in here to hide. I might ask you the same question, gentlemen."

"I wonder," Stephens continued, unabashed, "have you heard anything of the *Hannibal?* She was to meet us here to sell her cargo, but the longer we stay, the more danger . . . What arrangements have you made for the disposal of your own blacks, Captain?"

"I spoke Captain Ambridge's brig only last evening, and I am afraid that you gentlemen must give up hope. We were pursued together by the cutter, and the *Hannibal* was very foul . . . It was her capture by the cutter that made it possible for me to escape."

Captain Stephens coughed and fussed with the stem of his wine glass. No one spoke. De Verviers tapped his long fingers on the table and looked at Stephens.

"As for myself, I had planned to run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Lenoir stepped back like a cat, the sharp blade flicking out of his sword cane.

in to a certain place in the bayous of the Mississippi delta. I have friends there."

Lenoir's voice trailed off. The others remained silent. De Verviers shifted his glance to Lenoir's face, wrinkled his forehead. Captain Stephens coughed again, then spoke.

"It might be a real saving to you if you were to get rid of your cargo now. Once those blacks are out of your hold you will be in no danger from the Revenue Marine . . . and you could nearly have another load shipped in Guinea by the time it would take you to get your affairs completed in the Delta. What price were you thinking of receiving there?"

I paid little attention while they haggled over the details of price. I must have dozed off lightly, for the next thing I remember was the brilliant sun in my eyes. It had become late afternoon, and the shadow of the main boom had shifted away from my face.

In the cabin below they had already arranged for buying the slaves the *Black Peacock* carried. Evidently no one yet suspected them to have been originally the cargo of their syndicate's vessel, the

Hannibal. Such piracy as Lenoir's was far from unknown in the slave trade, but few people would expect the robber to sell his loot to the persons he had robbed.

De Verviers' voice caught my attention. "I really can't understand," he was saying, "why your face seems so familiar to me, Lenoir. The only solution I can think of is that we must have known each other as boys. I must ask my grandmother if she knows anything about a Lenoir family in the last generation."

Lenoir narrowed his eyes, then smiled. "If we could only proceed with the transaction, gentlemen . . . As long as that cutter is about, I should prefer to spend as little time here as possible."

Captain Stephens rose from the table. "Very well. If you will excuse me, I should prefer to look over your blacks before we close."

I started to slide off the cabin trunk before they should discover me by the skylight, but halted with a start. De Verviers had leaned far across the table, and was staring strangely at Lenoir.

"Lenoir..." he said, his voice tense, "I think perhaps I remember—"

Then he screamed.

Lenoir had reached out like a rattlesnake, and ground his lighted cigar into the man's eye.

FOR A moment no one moved. The shock of Lenoir's action paralyzed them. Lenoir stepped back from the table like a cat, the sharp blade flicking out of the tip of his sword cane. De Verviers lay crumpled over the table, his hands over his face and his shoulders heaving soundlessly. Then Lenoir brought the hilt of his cane down on De Verviers' head.

"Regan!"

"Aye, aye, sir." The discipline of twenty years at sea jerked the answer out of me. Without thinking I had slipped the derringer into my hand, hammer cocked, and I think only the suddenness of the order stopped me from shooting Lenoir on the spot.

"If one of these gentlemen moves, shoot him. Captain Stephens! Your strong box should be here in the cabin. Open it . . . Because this fool here came too close to something which did not concern him should not blind us to our own best interests. You will give me the money now. It is unfortunate that you will not be able to examine my cargo first, but that is the price you must pay for this man's presence on board. We will transfer the slaves immediately.

"I warn you not to cross me. I took precautions against being captured before I left my vessel—even if you should be able to force me to order my men to surrender, they would refuse. My crew lies under arms at this moment—and if I should be harmed, my mate Husain would take great pleasure in impaling you . . . Now—the money, Captain."

"He—he has the key." Stephens gestured toward De Verviers' body squirming on the table. His hand trembled as he pointed.

"Get it."

Stephens grunted and moved toward the table. His hand slid under De Verviers' coat, searched carefully, and flashed out with a pistol. The point of Lenoir's sword cane took him in the throat before he could raise it above the table.

He coughed for the last time, gurgling in his throat as he slid to the floor. Patterson watched stolidly, his face unchanging.

"Now—the money, Patterson." Lenoir spoke exactly as before. Patterson turned to the lockers on one side of the cabin and heaved out a small, heavy ironbound box. He placed it carefully on the table and reached down to Stephens' pocket where he lay on the deck. Lenoir leaned over the table, sword cane ready.

Patterson straightened up with a small key in his hand. He slid it into the keyhole of the box, turned it, and clicked open the lid. The box was filled with small canvas bags.

Lenoir began to slip them into the tail pockets of his coat. When the box was empty he looked up at Patterson, smiling like a cat with a fresh mouse.

"This one will come with me." He dipped the point of his sword cane toward De Verviers. "You will be left in the cabin here, tied and gagged. If Regan can find a spike, he will plug your gun before we leave. I am, however, an honest man. I will bring my schooner alongside, and you may transfer the slaves at once.

"Now—will you please turn around."

I had hardly moved since answering Lenoir. Once I had looked forward to see if De Verviers' scream had alarmed the crew, but they had all been below except for an Indian sleeping in the bows. He had never even rolled over.

Lenoir's order had stopped me from squeezing the trigger, and fear for myself kept me from trying again. If these men should seize one of the men who had killed their captain and maimed their supercargo I doubted that my having killed Lenoir would make my death any less sudden.

While Patterson's back was turned Lenoir knocked him on the head and tied him with strips from the tablecloth. Quickly he turned to the unconscious De Verviers, slipped his hands under the other's armpits, and dragged him up the companionway to the spar deck.

He swept a swift look over the vessel. The Indian snored gently. He pulled the senseless body to the rail where our dinghy was tied and looked up at me.

"Regan!" His voice was low and urgent. "Help me get this man into the boat!"

He slipped over the side into the dinghy. I lowered De Verviers down to him, and was about to follow when he stopped me.

"See if there is something on deck to plug that touch hole with."

I looked closely about me. The deck was shipshape, everything in place. Nothing in sight. I looked back to Lenoir and shook my head.

He grimaced. "Fire the pistol into the touch hole." His eyes narrowed to slits. "Hurry!"

I ran across the deck to the carronade amidships. Taking the derringer carefully in my hand. I pointed the muzzle straight down into the touch hole and jerked the trigger. The Indian leaped to his feet and yelled something unintelligible.

A man stuck his head out of the fore hatch and stopped dead still at the sight of Lenoir's leveled pistol.

"Lay below, all of you. The first head I see will get a bullet through it."

The two seamen disappeared below as if they had been pulled by strings. I tumbled down into the dinghy and grasped the oars. The blades bit the water and I heaved until my muscles cracked. We were already halfway to the *Black Peacock* before one of the *Charlotte's* crew got enough courage to come on deck. Even then none of them fired at us, and after what seemed hours of rowing we reached our schooner. I scrambled over the rail, and pulled De Verviers' body after me.

Lenoir had hardly reached the deck when he began to snap orders. My gun crew already lay by the long eighteen, and the gun was primed and shotted. The others hurried to the capstan to bring up our anchor, then to the halliards to hoist the fore and main sails. Under fore and aft sails alone we moved toward the *Charlotte Amalie.*

CHAPTER VI

CONTRABAND CARGO

HER crew stood about her decks like a herd of sheep as we came down on them. Although most of them had some type of weapon in hand, our long eighteen was too convincing an argument. Our own crew lined the rail like hungry wolves, and the *Charlotte's* seamen had no leader to whip them into action.

As we scraped alongside the other schooner, lashings were quickly passed, making us fast on the *Charlotte.* Patterson lay on the afterdeck, already untied but still groggy from Lenoir's blow. He grimaced slightly as the *Peacock's* crew swarmed aboard his vessel, disarming his own seamen, but made no other motion. Lenoir ignored him completely, and began to give orders to both crews. After one look at his face the *Charlotte's* men leaped to obey him.

Lenoir had the other crew do the real work of transferring the slaves, while his own men stood armed on both decks, carefully guarding the operation. This time I could not be below or absorbed in work of my own, and for the first time the real horror of the slave trade struck me.

Gaunt skeletons that had been strong warriors a month ago in Africa, they stumbled dazed across the decks, rubbing the open sores caused by the irons. They had two feet of deckspace down below—two feet between the special slave decks in our hold, and a space two feet wide

and just long enough for them to lie chained in rows.

They had lain in chains for nearly a month, through storm and calm and sea fight, in their own foulness. The slave decks were never cleaned during a voyage. They had lain there while nearly a third of their number died, were cut out of their chains and heaved to the sharks. Sharks always followed a slave ship, and grew fat by it.

Lenoir reached out and sunk his fingers into the shoulder of a woman as she stumbled past.

"Tough . . . " he said over his shoulder to Patterson, who was observing the work silently. "A few months of feeding and that will be a fine black wench. You are a fortunate man."

Patterson did not look as if he thought so. The fact that Lenoir was actually giving him the slaves could only mean that he really was worried about that Revenue cutter. It would even fit in with the man's character to seek out the cutter, after he had disposed of his incriminating cargo, and inform it of the location of the *Charlotte Amalie*. Even if Patterson could return successfully with the slaves he would have to explain to the owners how their relative De Verviers had been carried off, their captain killed, and twice the value paid for the slaves. Mr. Patterson seemed a very unhappy man.

Across the bay the sun was setting. It threw a painted ceiling over the wild, lonesome bay, a contrast to the human misery and squalor on our decks. Lenoir ordered the lanterns lit, and the work continued as the light failed.

It was an unearthly scene, the long slow line of black skeletons in the flickering lantern light, the glint of cutlass blade and musket barrel, the sound of the sweating blacksmith's hammer in the hold . . .

Suddenly Husain let out a long, wild yell. Every head snapped around, to see a tall schooner bearing down on us. In the dusk, absorbed in their work, no one noticed the strange vessel until she was only a few hundred yards away . . . and she had a row of gunports along her side, open and grinning at us.

It was the Revenue cutter.

For a fraction of a second Lenoir stood like the rest of us, open-mouthed with astonishment at the cutter's appearance. Then he turned himself and began to slash at the ropes which bound us to the *Charlotte*. Others leaped to cut the lashings or to loose our sails. It took only a few moments to swing free, and the sails had only been clewed up to the yards, so that they were set at pulling almost immediately.

Those few moments were almost too long. Even as we pulled away and began to pick up speed the cutter swept across the bay toward us. She was within pistol shot when her head swung and she fired her broadside into our stern.

There were only four small guns in that broadside, but on our small schooner they felt like the battery of a forty-four gun frigate. The vessel shuddered under the shock of the round shot, the splinters dropped five men screaming on the deck, and Mr. Fox was nearly torn in two by one ball.

LENOIR stood by him, only two feet away, but he never moved. He even smiled slightly, for by swinging around to fire the broadside the cutter had lost distance. A small enough advantage for Lenoir, but something which might mean the difference between escape and capture.

It was hopeless to attempt the tortuous passage to the open sea at night and under the guns of the cutter. We could only flee south down the bay, caught inside the reef. There would be other passages before were trapped in the southern end of the bay, but if the cutter continued after us we would not be able to use them either. I was startled from my thoughts by the crack of Lenoir's cane across my shoulders.

"Get to your gun, Regan!" His face was pale with anger. "Husain may introduce you to the pleasant custom of impalement if you fail your duty again. Load with round shot and cripple her rigging when you get a chance to fire!"

I ran forward to the eighteen pounder, but I knew that I would never fire it. It was one thing to fight another slaver, an outlaw to every nation's fleets, but to fire on the flag I had served under would turn me into a pirate myself. Even to save my

own skin, to which I am rather attached, I would never pull that lanyard.

At Lenoir's order the lanterns in our rigging were put out. The cutter had come back on her course behind us, but the last sunlight had disappeared, and the night would soon swallow us up. A flash came from the cutter's bows, but the shot fell wide. It seemed to me that the distance between the two vessels was beginning to widen.

Then the cutter began to swing around again. Her broadside crashed again, but only two of her shot struck us, wounding one man. Lenoir gazed fixedly at the dim shape of the cutter in the night . . . her masts began to swing back in line . . . abruptly our distance from the cutter increased. She had abandoned the chase to take the *Charlotte Amalie* as she lay helpless at anchor, figuring that a bird in the hand was worth two in the bay.

Lenoir breathed deeply. The cutter could not find him again that night, and by morning he could be out on the open sea.

"Stand by to go about!"

My head jerked around to stare at him. Could he be going back to fight the cutter, one gun against eight?

The *Black Peacock* came around on the wind on the starboard tack, headed toward the inner shore of the bay. Suddenly I understood his maneuver. While the cutter was busy with the *Charlotte,* Lenoir could sneak past into the north end of the bay, and by the time the cutter was finished combing the south end he could be far away on the voyage back to Puerto Rico.

Even though Lenoir's escape meant my freedom from prison, I felt cold disappointment. Even a prison cell would be better than my life on the *Peacock.* And Lenoir's actions had built up an increasing hatred in me. I felt that I would be willing to swing myself if it would put Lenoir's head in a noose.

We slipped quietly across the bay. Lenoir put a lookout in the bows to call out as soon as he could see the shore. The rest of us lay silent on the deck, and some even slept.

"Land ahead!"

At the lookout's low call Lenoir began to give the order to go about, but he never completed it. Even as he opened his mouth the schooner quivered as if we had rammed a continent.

We had run aground on a sand bank. I knew without investigating, for at our speed coral would have ripped the bow planks open, and I had heard nothing but the shock of meeting.

"Back the topsails!"

The yards swung so that the wind struck on the forward side of the square-sails, forcing the schooner backwards. The masts creaked under the strain, but the hull did not move in the grip of the sand.

Under Husain's direction seamen lowered the dinghy as if the devil were after them, placed the anchor in it, and then pulled to the stern of the vessel. The anchor line was passed back to them, and they carried the anchor out astern and dropped it onto the bottom of the bay. The line was passed around the capstan, and the crew began to heave on the capstan bars.

The schooner shifted slightly but refused to move back an inch. Lenoir set the seamen to carrying the slave chains out of the hold and heaving them over the side. As a last resort he ordered me to train the long gun aft, to decrease the draft of the forward part of the schooner as much as possible.

The crew were sent back to the capstan, and strained their backs until the muscles stood out like rope. Slowly the schooner began to inch out of the grip of the sand bank.

I stood by the gun, hidden in the night. I could not bring myself to help Lenoir save the schooner. When first we ran aground I had hoped that he would be caught till morning, in plain view of the cutter lying by the *Charlotte* right across the bay. As the *Black Peacock* crept backwards out of her trap I felt that my last chance to see her captain pay for the way I had been treated was slipping away.

I began to realize that the last action made of my own free will had been to rescue this same man from assassins . . . and since I had been sucked under his domination every action had been made against my will and according to his orders.

My hand rested on the gun beside me. I ran my hand back and forth over the cool iron, anger building up in me. Then

my fingers touched the lanyard. The gun had been loaded and primed while we were running from the cutter, and now it lay trained aft with its muzzle depressed. My fingers wrapped themselves in the lanyard leading to the flint and steel firing mechanism.

THE GUN roared and leaped against the breeching tackle, its muzzle blast stabbing into the dark like a lightning bolt. The heavy ball snapped the mainmast a few feet above the deck and crashed downward through the deck. The mainmast snapped its stays and fell to starboard into the water, throwing a shower of spray onto the deck.

Then there was silence. Every man on the schooner had been deafened by the unexpected shot. For a moment no one moved, then Lenoir's voice was raised in cold fury.

"Regan!"

I cleared the rail in a long running dive, and slipped into the waters of the bay. But as I rose I heard another body strike the water close to mine, and a hand brushed across my shoulders. I ducked, ready to swim to shore under the surface, but the same hand groped at my neck and settled in a death grip around my throat. I threw my head up, straining to reach the air. The hand closed tighter, and another joined it. First I tore unthinking at the stranglehold about my throat, then slipped my own hands back along the other's wrists and arms until I found his head.

With the last scrap of consciousness remaining to me I found his eyes and drove my thumbs into them. The grip fell away from me, but it was too late to help. My mind blacked out.

I recovered my senses lying on the hard deck of the *Black Peacock*, Husain's huge body standing over me, dripping like my own. Lenoir stood beside him, his sword cane open, the point tapping the deck next to my head. When he spoke his voice was as level and cold as it had always been, but it carried an overtone of insanity in its calmness.

"I wish you to understand, Regan, that you have accomplished nothing by this foolish action. The schooner will lose, but I have gained enough by this voyage to buy a dozen schooners. By the time morning comes and the cutter sees us I will be gone in the dinghy, and you will have died, slowly and painfully."

He paused for a moment, tapping the deck. I had given up all hope for my own life, but I knew that Lenoir would find great difficulty in actually escaping. The dinghy could not go to sea, and he must try to slip five hundred miles along the coast to reach the nearest port. If by some chance the cutter did not capture him the Seminoles probably would.

"The penalty for mutiny is determined by tradition. However, I think a few refinements can be added to the usual flogging to death. I have men in my crew who are skilled in the removal of skin from cattle, and I think they would have no objections to widening their experience. Husain, have this fool triced up in the foreshrouds, and get that man in my cabin to be strung up beside him."

Rough hands dragged me forward and tied me by my thumbs to one of the ratlines in the foreshrouds, so that my toes barely touched the deck. Another body

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Rough hands dragged me forward and tied me by my thumbs, so that my toes barely touched the deck.

was tied up next to me, and I recognized it to be De Verviers, the supercargo of the *Charlotte Amalie*. Even in the face of flogging and flaying alive, I wondered what De Verviers had been about to reveal when Lenoir had acted so swiftly and terribly.

What could he have feared so deeply?

I meant to speak to De Verviers, but I was interrupted by the return of Lenoir. I could hear the lashes of the cat-o-nine-tails whipping around his boots as he walked.

"Husain! Take this. Distribute this equally between these two. I do not wish to show favoritism. One lash for Regan, then one for this other. De Verviers! Can you hear me?"

My companion nodded his head.

"I had hoped to be able to attend to this privately, but time presses. Did you ever expect to see me like this, my friend?"

De Verviers shook his head.

"Ah, yes. Our relationship has changed indeed. Still, it is only just that you should be here now. That which you once gave

me I shall return with the interest of a lifetime. Still, I am merciful. I shall hold back the iron . . . being skinned alive takes longer, but the fortunate victim usually dies. I did not die, but it is more terrible to live with wounds of the mind than to die of those of the body . . . Husain, proceed."

The lashes seared my back like fire. At the same time the full realization of the reason for Lenoir's fear of De Verviers seared into my mind. There was only one thing for which a man was branded in the United States . . .

The lash came down again and again. De Verviers screamed like a woman. I had felt a cat before, but under Husain's arm it ripped at my back like a saw. I knew the flesh would soon be cut from my ribs, but I had lost any hope of living . . .

I fainted, only to be revived by a bucket of salt water on my bleeding back. The cat struck me again . . .

CHAPTER VII

A JOB FOR THE HANGMAN

OUT of the darkness behind the schooner a broadside crashed like a roll of thunder. I could hear the balls thudding into the planking around me. The cutter had heard the firing of the eighteen pounder and had come across the bay to search for us.

"Do you strike?"

The hail came across the water to us from the cutter.

"Come aboard!" Lenoir answered. He even managed to sound insulting. But as soon as he had spoken he turned to De Verviers, lifted his sword cane, and carefully ran him through the heart. My back muscles twisted in expectation of the point, but before he could strike again the cutter struck our stern, and the boarding crew poured onto the schooner. Our crew offered no resistance.

"Where is the captain of this vessel!" a bull-throated voice roared from the afterdeck. Lenoir stepped toward its owner, closing his sword as he went.

"Who are you, sir, and by what right did you fire on and board my schooner!" Lenoir's voice was icy, full of outrage.

"I am Ensign Prentice of the United States Revenue Marine, and I fired to prevent a slaver from escaping capture! Have you any further questions, sir?" Ensign Prentice roared louder than before.

"I have indeed. Exactly what makes you think this schooner is a slaver? What excuse do you have for your actions, firing into an unidentified vessel? How do you expect to explain the men you have killed? Sir, I shall see that you and your captain are courtmartialed and broken for this!"

The fury and unexpectedness of Lenoir's attack stopped the ensign's breath. When he spoke again his voice had dropped until it was hardly louder than a gale.

"Perhaps you should step on board the cutter. I think Captain Stark can satisfy you, sir, better than you might prefer."

I heard their voices grow fainter as they moved toward the cutter decks. Then one of the cutter's crew found De Verviers and myself hanging in the rigging.

"Hey, Charlie! Come over here and help me cut down these two poor fellows!"

They cut the cords that tied up my thumbs and lowered me to the deck. A moment later they discovered that De Verviers was dead. Someone hurried to tell the cutter's captain while two others carried De Verviers' body between them to the other vessel. I was herded along with him, but they carefully kept me separate from the rest of the *Black Peacock's* crew.

These had been disarmed, and were being escorted under guard onto the forecastle of the cutter. De Verviers' corpse was brought to the afterdeck of the cutter, myself along with it, and we were pushed down the companionway into the light of the cabin.

THE cutter's captain sat behind the cabin table, a lantern swinging over his head. Before him stood Lenoir like a fashion plate, but without his sword cane. The ensign stood to one side of him, his face flushed a deep red above the stock of his uniform coat. The captain's lips were drawn into a ruler line, his weatherbeaten face set like a New England cliff.

Lenoir was speaking. "As your men have discovered, there is neither slave, slave chain, nor slave deck aboard my vessel. You have attacked me without warning, on the word of a slaver's captain. You have accused me of piracy on the word of another slaver captain. Yet you have not one piece of evidence which will stand in a court of law.

"Captain Ambridge has long been an enemy of mine. One of his agents tried to have me assassinated in San Juan. The captain of the slaver you have just captured this evening invited me aboard his vessel and then tried to rob me of the specie I carried. I was forced to kill him in order to escape with my own life.

"And yet, the words of these men are all you have to bring against me. I have a certain amount of influence in the United States, Captain Stark, and I shall certainly use it to see that you receive the proper penalty for your actions—"

Ensign Prentice had moved over to De Verviers' body as soon as it had been brought in. Now he turned to Captain Stark and interrupted Lenoir's tirade.

"There is one more thing that Captain Lenoir will have to explain, sir. This man was found dead, triced up in the rigging with the other man you see here. They were being flogged as we boarded the schooner. This one is dead, murdered by a knife."

There was a moment of silence. Captain Stark looked at the body, his eyes narrowed into slits. His glance shifted to Lenoir, as deadly as a leveled pistol.

"The dead man is the hostage I took from the slave ship which tried to rob me. One of my crew is certainly guilty of murder, but that will not excuse your firing on an innocent merchant vessel. This other is a mutineer, hoping that those pirates on the *Charlotte Amalie* would capture us and share the loot with him."

Captain Stark broke in. "Perhaps we should hear the man's own story of what has happened."

I began to tell my story, as briefly as possible. The cutter's captain watched Lenoir all through my tale, observing every change in his face. When I had finished he almost smiled.

"His story tallies perfectly with Captain Ambridge's. From what Ambridge has told us, Captain Enoch Slocum of the whaler *Nancy Bedloe* was paid by Ambridge's syndicate to have you murdered in San Juan. . . . Captain Slocum does not have a tender conscience. Evidently he did not consider it betraying his trust to sell you the information which made it possible for you to intercept the *Hannibal* brig, since he intended to have you killed before you could use it. . . . It is too bad that he did not succeed. That job will be left for the hangman."

Lenoir looked at Stark like an adult at a particularly irritating child. "You forget that this man's statements will be no more valuable to you in court than the testimony of Ambridge and Patterson. He admits deserting the *Nancy Bedloe* after assaulting the mate. I had him released from the San Juan *carcel* after he had tried to rob two citizens of the town.

"I frankly do not care what you may believe, Captain Stark. I am only interested in what I can make a court believe. And that will be enough to cost you your commission."

The lantern overhead swung gently. Captain Stark glared at Lenoir, while Ensign Prentice seemed on the point of explosion. I was close to fainting from pain and weariness, but I knew that I was the only man on the cutter who could put Lenoir in irons.

Before I could get up enough strength to speak, Lenoir had begun again. "I think, Captain, that you would do well to drop the charges against me. You can't make them stick—you know as well as I do that you can't convict a man of slaving unless he is caught in the act, and there isn't even a chain in my vessel. And if you should be so stupid as to bring me into court, you will only accomplish your own disgrace and ruin."

Lenoir ran his hand gracefully through his hair, smiled triumphantly at Stark.

"Sir! I would fry in Tophet before I would connive with a dirty stinking pirate and slave captain! I will take my chances on you, Lenoir. You may possibly go free—but the guilt for that will not lie on my own head."

The cabin seemed to shift strangely around me. Weak and dizzy, I stumbled forward and half collapsed against the table. Stark bellowed for a seaman to

come and take me forward to the surgeon, but before any could reach me I managed to point at Lenoir and speak two words.

"Strip him. . . ."

Lenoir's eyes dilated like a tiger about to spring. He looked so evil that Prentice placed a beefy hand on his shoulder to hold him back from me. Captain Stark stared at me as if I had been moonstruck.

"Strip him? And why would that do any good?"

"If the captain pleases, this man will present the captain no problem when he comes to trial. . . . If you will only strip him to the waist now. . . ."

"Answer my question! Why do you think it would do any good to strip this man's back?"

My eyes refused to focus. Captain Stark separated into two fuzzy blue and white images . . . slid back together. . . .

"Answer me!"

My mind cleared for a moment. "Because this man carries the marks of the whip and scar of the branding iron!"

"The branding iron," Captain Stark stammered. "But he's a white man. . . ."

"He is not. He is an octoroon, and an escaped slave, already branded for one unsuccessful attempt. I think that you will find the brand of the De Verviers family on his back—and his motive for murdering De Verviers."

PRENTICE held Lenoir in a grip of iron, but it seemed unnecessary. He only looked at me with terrible eyes, all the starch gone out of his backbone. He had dropped the elegant mannerisms, the affected gentility, and his shoulders seemed to droop already.

Stark glanced at him with obvious distaste. "Take off your coat and shirt!"

Under the tense gaze of every man in the room Lenoir slowly took off his coat and waistcoat and slipped his shirt over his head.

"Turn around!"

Slowly he turned. His back was a criss-cross pattern of lash marks, and on the right shoulder was a large branded *F,* for "fugitive," and below it a small *dV.* His hands were tightly clenched, and his chest heaved. . . . He trembled as if with fever. I would hardly have recognized the elegant, ruthless man who had ruled his crew with fear; who had dominated every situation in which I had seen him.

As well as I knew his cruelty and viciousness, I could not help feeling a twinge of pity for him. He had been a proud man, and now he was broken and destroyed.

Captain Stark waved to the two sailors who carried in De Verviers' body, and pointed to Lenoir. "Double irons," was all he said. As the seamen hustled him from the room Lenoir made his last gesture of defiance. When he stepped over De Verviers' body he wrenched himself out of the hands of his guards, bent over, and carefully spat into the dead man's face.

The cabin door slammed behind him, and Captain Stark turned to me. "It seems I owe you something, Regan," he said, "and I like to pay my debts. It is true that you took part in a piratical attack on the *Hannibal,* but she herself was an outlaw to every man-of-war.

"You also supported Lenoir on board the *Charlotte Amalie.* That can also be excused, I think. You faced what seemed certain death to cripple the *Black Peacock,* and without that she would have escaped and left no traces. . . . How would you like to join the Revenue Marine, Regan?"

"Aye, aye, sir," I managed to say. I cared very little what berth I got, so long as I earned my bread. Merchant ship or Revenue cutter, the sea is just as wet.

"My other officer died of the fever three weeks ago," Stark said, "and according to your story you once served as a gunnery officer of a privateer."

I stared at him. This was no ordinary offer of a berth before the mast. "What does the Captain mean, sir?"

"I have no authority to commission officers," he answered, "but I have friends who do. You will take the late Lieutenant Reeves' place until we reach New Orleans —and there I shall see that you receive a commission to the same position. . . . Well?"

I was left speechless. The room whirled about me, and I gripped the table tightly.

"Mr. Prentice!" Stark's voice boomed like a cannon. "Can't you see that Acting Lieutenant Regan is ill? Help him to a bunk, man!"

THE SWORD OF DON MANUEL

By

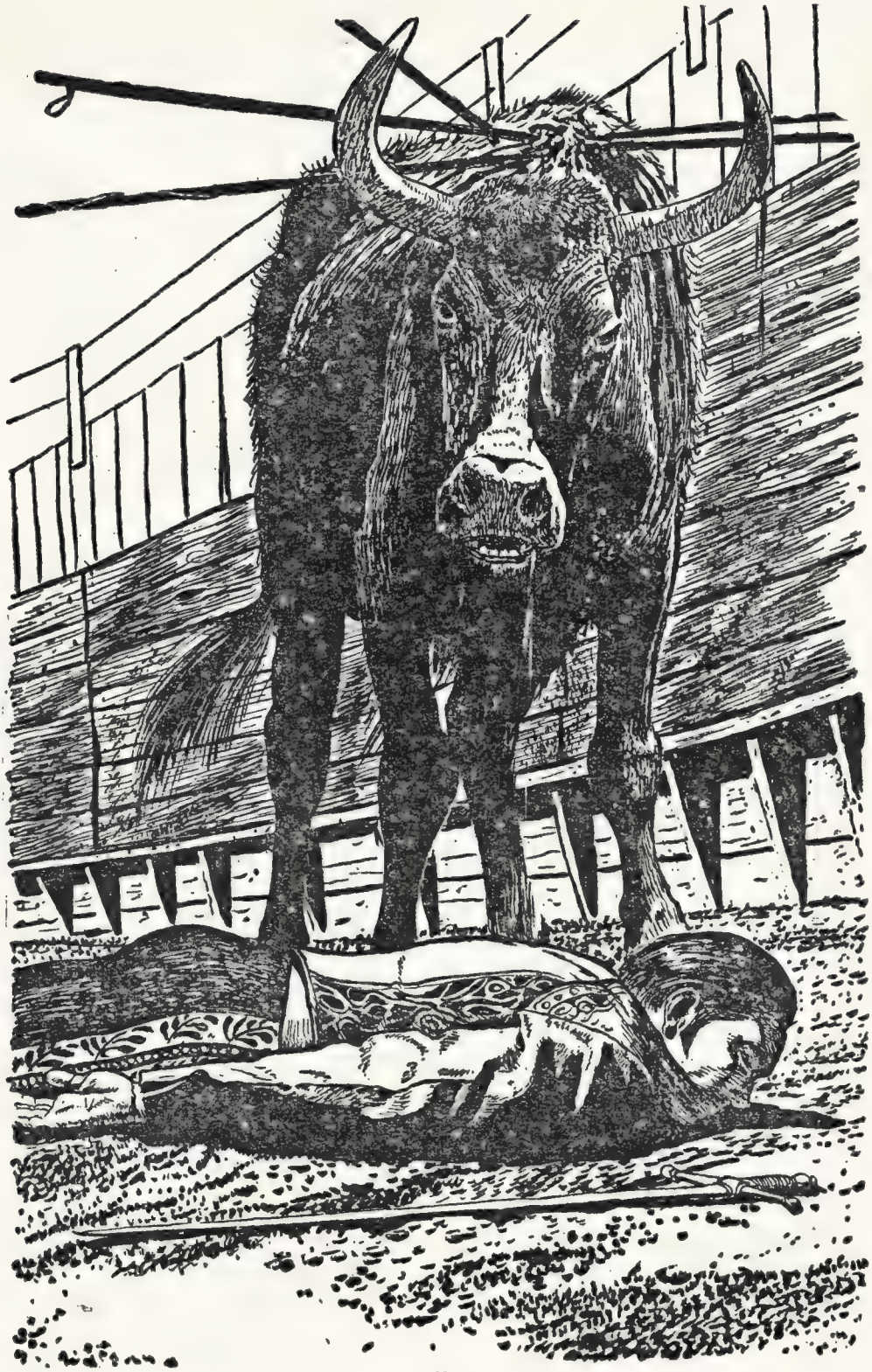
WILBUR S. PEACOCK

ILLUSTRATED BY
EARL EUGENE MAYAN

Even as the boy fell before the bull, Manuel had snatched muleta and sword and was bounding to the ring.

EARLY sunlight crawled lazily across the bed and touched Manuel's sweaty sleeping face; and he turned and muttered for a moment, and then woke, last night's taste still dark in his mouth. For a time he lay without moving, feeling the day's heat coming, smelling the dust and hearing the sounds of movement in the street below.

This is the day, a tiny corner of memory said, and he licked his dry lips. This was the day, indeed, for when the sun was



riding low, then he would face *el toro* with a heart-shaped *muleta* and a slim *estoque* and only one would walk away from the encounter.

He shivered at the thought, despite the creeping heat, and sat at last on the edge of the bed, reaching automatically for the bottle of stale wine on the rickety table. He was naked, and sweat ran in warm rivulets along his compact body. He was not tall, yet neither was he short, and muscles rippled in his body as he moved. Scars were white worms on his brown skin, the marks of *el toro* and his profession.

The wine was sour, but it cleared his head and mouth, and he replaced the bottle before standing. "Huh, huh!" he snorted, stamping in the way of the ring, and then passed the bull with an *afalarado*, feeling the rush of needle horns and the rank smell of the bull's hide.

For a brief moment he was caught in the fantasy; and then reality returned, and he was but a man again, surrounded by the squalor of a cheap hotel room, its paint scabrous, the rug so worn it held neither color nor lines. The bed sagged, and a lonely roach minced along the floor. Bowl and pitcher were on the dresser, reflected in the cracked mirror. Except for a single chair, nothing else was in the room.

Manuel shrugged and paced to the dresser. He sopped a towel in the pitcher's tepid water and sluiced his body. He wrung the cloth and dried himself as best he could, then began to dress.

"New clothes," he said to the cockroach. "Shirt and trousers and boots and hat, all the things which are so needed. These shall I have when I so cleverly slay the bull this afternoon."

He pondered the thought and found it good. When *el toro* had pierced his guts with a slashing horn, the wound had done more than hurt. It had drained his strength and flattened his purse, and many months had passed before he had found the will to fight again. But now he laughed, for this was the day when fortune smiled again, when he would step forth in all the glory of the matador, to pit himself against a living juggernaut, to hear the cries of "Ole! Ole!" from the frenzied onlookers.

"Ha!" he laughed to himself and caught up his sword case before standing in front of the mirror.

The clothes were old, but once they had been rich. Mends were there, but they did not show; Carmelita was clever with her needle. He looked good, and the touch of gray in his dark hair, in truth, made him appear to be no older. More distinguished, perhaps, but not older.

MANUEL grinned and saluted himself and then let himself out of the room. The hall was dim and cool and he went along it to the stairs and there descended to the ground floor. A servant swept desultorily, not looking up. Voices sounded in the cantina, and he went through the door.

"Manuel!" Jose cried from a near table. "Thrice welcome. And how is our slayer of bulls today?"

Laughter swung from two others at the table, and Manuel grinned. Old friends these were, Jose and Roberto and Don Achelete. Many a bottle had they slain together, and there was nothing about *el toro* they did not know. And so he grinned and drew back a chair and sat.

"The slayer of bulls," he said, "is almost dead. Just what did we drink last night?"

Jose spread soft fat hands. "If it poured, we drank it," he admitted.

"What a party!" Roberto chuckled in his half-voice. A bull had almost torn away his throat ten years before, and now his words were strange to those who knew him not.

"Bah!" Don Achelete said testily. "Cannot you see the man is dying. Pour coffee." But his eyes laughed, too.

Manuel drank, sword case balanced across his lap. The coffee was thick and hot and harsh, and its warmth crept through him in soothing waves. He relaxed and poured more coffee from the heavy pot, wishing he could eat, something which no fighter did on a fighting day because surgery might be needed should an accident happen.

"The day is good," he observed. "There is no wind."

"He talks of wind!" Jose said.

"So he talks of wind!" Roberto echoed.

"You both talk like fools!" Don Achelete said in his thin voice.

Manuel looked from man to man. Some jest was being made, but he did not understand.

"Que es, cabezos de vaca?" he asked. "What secret have you cow-heads now."

"Me!" Jose said exultantly. "I shall tell him."

"Well, tell him," Don Achelete said.

Manuel felt the others' excitement tugging at him. What they knew, he did not know. But it must be good.

"Juanito!" Jose crowed. "By the livers of the dark gods, Juanito is here this day."

"No!" Manuel said, and suddenly there was a tightness in his heart.

How long had it been now? His memory searched. Five—eight, no, nine years since last he had seen his son. It was a thing beyond belief that so long a time could pass. But so it had, and now the boy must be a man, grown and solid, still carrying the marks of his mother's beauty in his dark eyes and olive skin.

"Where—how do you know?" Manuel said and cleared his throat.

"How do we know, he asked!" Roberto said. "Manuel, we know because we know." He chuckled in self-delight.

Don Achelete snorted. "Rubirosa cannot fight today," he explained, "and so another had to be hired for the fights. And lo! when we went to look at this *novillero* this morning, it was your son, still beardless, but as like you in your youth as any son could be to his father."

"But he is only a boy!" Manuel cried. "And the bulls are Belmontes!"

"Belmontes, Buarras, does it matter!" Jose said in contempt. "He is your son and he will not cry yellow."

Manuel forced a grin, and then the grin was real, for swift exultation was building in him. Juanito—his son—by the gods, this was a day he would long remember.

"What is he like, this son of mine?" he asked. "It has been so long since last we met. Even though—" he added defensively, "I have sent much money and many gifts for his welfare."

Jose tented fat fingers. "Like a reed," he said. "And yet he is not thin. Hair black as a Belmonte's hide, and eyes that must have already broken hearts in Cordoba. Like you, he looks, and yet there is a difference, something of—"

"Of Maria?" Manuel said softly.

These were his friends, and they knew his story, and so he felt no sense of shame at the mention of his wife with whom he had not lived for twelve years.

"Of Maria!" Jose echoed. He snapped his fingers. *"Novillero,* he may be, but there is the look of a true matador about him."

"What else could he be," Roberto said, "with the blood of Don Manuel in his veins?"

"Softly, softly, *amigo,"* Manuel said. "Now, where may I see my son?"

"At the hotel two blocks down," Jose said.

"Good!" Manuel rose, and excitement tightened his fingers about the slim sword case. "I will see him now, while there is time before the fights. Wish me luck with the bulls."

"Vaya, Usted, con Dios!" Don Achelete said.

"Show him the sword, Manuel," Jose cried. "Show him the sword of your father which will some day be his."

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Manuel laughed aloud and left the room. Sunlight lay thick and yellow-hot on everything, and he moved through it, conscious of its weight. People were in the street, and some he knew and greeted. Some called luck for the afternoon, and a few urchins tagged at his heels. He liked that.

It was a far cry from the days when many had followed. Still, he was not completely forgotten, and for that he was glad and uplifted for the moment.

"Son of my flesh," he said to himself. "Not a boy, but a man, his first bull to be blooded this afternoon. Was ever any man so gifted by the gods!"

His steps came faster, and he hurried along the dusty walk, sword case swinging in his hand.

He was no longer conscious of the case. So many years had it been at hand's reach, it was a part of him, like his breath or his hopes. Slim it was, of Toledo steel. Engraving ran its length, and the hilt fitted a clenched hand so cunningly the weight was hardly felt. His father had fought with it, and he, and some day it would belong to Juanito. It was a brave sword, a proud sword. It had blooded its length in a thousand bulls, and never had it been dishonored.

And now Manuel swung it carelessly, as his father must have swung it. The case was worn, but the steel was bright, and today a Belmonte and a Buarra would fall before its gleaming length.

Manuel laughed aloud at the thought. He would blood a bull in the sight of his son, and then his son would begin his career which could go no other way than forward.

HE CROSSED the street and was at the hotel. Doors were open for any breeze, and the interior beckoned, its shadows cool and inviting. He stepped inside, squinting against the dimness. A pulse pounded at his temples, and he wondered if he would recognize his son.

"Manuel!"

He heard the voice, and the day was gone and this was a dozen years before. It was strange how well he remembered. It was soft and yet compelling, and he turned and stared blindly at the woman for a moment. Then he was bowing with easy grace, hoping his voice would not betray his emotions.

"Maria," he said, "it has been long."

He had sometimes wondered, when he was alone, if her beauty had faded. Years are harsh, and none can stand against them too long. He had felt their silver touch and so he had wondered.

But if she had changed, it was only a softening, like the mellowness which comes to great paintings. She was still slim and curved, and a curl was in her hair. Brown eyes smiled at him, and her mouth was red.

"Too long," she said. She touched his arm. "Come and talk with me for a time."

"But—" he began.

"Juanito is asleep," Maria said gently. "There will be plenty of time after he awakes."

And so he followed the woman who had been his wife in fact, and was still his wife in name. They went past dusty chairs to a couch in the corner, and sat, a bit awkward in their thoughts now.

"You have been ill," she said, and he laughed away her words.

"I crossed my feet, and the bull did not," he said lightly. "Now I am well, and I shall not cross my feet again."

She smiled. "I warned you of that in Cadiz," she said. "But you would never listen to me."

He waited, sensing she had words to say, yet when they came, they shocked him.

"Manuel," Maria said simply, "I wish for you to urge Juanito to give up this stupid bullfighting."

"Give up—" Manuel caught his breath. "You joke, Maria."

Her face was still now, as it had been the last day they had met, the day of their separation. She shook her head.

"I do not joke, Manuel," she said. "You know I do not joke. The *Plaza del Toro* is not the place for our son. Believe me when I say this to you, the only man I've ever loved; Juanito is not a man to wield a sword and slay a bull. At the University, it is said he is the most brilliant student at law ever to study there. He is a student, not a butcher. I beg you, Manuel, to tell him to study law, for he will listen to you."

He drew a deep breath, feeling the anger within him. This was almost as it had been years before, except then it had been he and not Juanito whose life and career had been jeopardized.

"No!" he said flatly.

"Manuel, you must!"

"I tell you, no. He is nineteen, a man grown. It is said he has the look and fire of a matador. If so, then a fighter he must be."

"A fighter!" Never had he heard such contempt in Maria's voice. "A butcher who faces a he-cow and slays it. A man who fattens on the cries of blood-crazed people."

He was standing. Fury blazed in him.

"We fought about this once before," he said, so softly it was almost a whisper, so great was his rage. "You told me those things and many more. We became two, where we had been one." He straightened. "You do not understand what it is to face the bull in the sunlight, to know that death waits but a few inches from you. You do not know the thrill of facing a thousand pounds of sword-horned murder—and to best it by the cleverness of your skill. That you do not know."

"Skill!" Maria laughed darkly. "Manuel, look at yourself. Nineteen years have you fought the bulls. Nineteen long years have you flaunted your skill in a thousand arenas. And what have you, what are you? Look at yourself, Manuel and answer me that."

Manuel clenched his fist, and he could feel the Toledo steel in his fingers.

"There has been money, much money," he said, "on which you and the boy have lived. There have been fame and glory."

"And there has been dust," Maria said. "There has been dust where love and life should have been. Are you so blind, Manuel, that you cannot see I speak the truth. You are no Manoletto, Manuel, no great matador. You are competent, not brilliant; there is no greatness in you. And Juanito is so like you in many ways that I catch my breath at times. There is no greatness in him, either, Manuel, not in this thing he plans because he worships you. I beg you, as one you once loved, save your son from this folly."

He had the sword in both hands now, and it bent within its leather sheath, bent and bowed and sprang full-length again.

"I tell him nothing," he said. "He shall follow in the steps of his father and his grandfather. This sword shall be his to guide his life, as it has guided mine."

"The sword, the sword of Don Manuel!" All hope was gone from her voice now. "It was a brave weapon. It never served in dishonor. 'Blood me not in dishonor,' is not that the engraving on its length?" She laughed. "Honor is composed of many things, Manuel," she finished, "but of that you do not understand."

"I understand this," he said, "that a mother and wife can forget her duty."

"Duty!" Maria stood, too. "Never use that word to me," she cried. "Never use that word to me until you know its meaning."

She turned, then, and was gone, and he watched her walk away, wanting to stop her, to retract the hot words she had aroused from him. But pride was his, too, and so he watched her go and made no move to halt her.

The sword was heavy in his hands, and he regarded it for a moment without moving. He wanted to see Juanito, but he knew that now was not the time.

He swore softly and briefly and went toward the door. At the sunshine he paused a moment. Then, sighing, he went out and back down the street. There was much to do before the fights this afternoon.

His back was proud, and he walked firmly. Yet unaccountably, hot tears burned at his eyes, and he shook his head in anger at the childishness of the emotion.

"By the gods," he vowed, "I shall prove to her once and for all that greatness lies in fighting."

And swinging the sword case, he went down the dusty street.

THE FIRST bull was dead. Crimson darkened on the torn sand, and the carcass had been dragged from the arena, ignominious and grotesque in death, unlike the sleek black devil which had rushed in vicious surges at the fleeting figure of Chavez.

The crowd had screamed itself hoarse at the deed, and Chavez had made his walk about the arena, holding aloft the

ears and tail awarded him by the down-flung handkerchief of *El Presidente*. He was slim and swaggering, and his youth was a shield which seemed invulnerable now against the coming years.

Manuel watched morosely, waiting for his bull, the first of two. Dust hung in the air, and the arena was a crowding bowl of heat. His *traje* was heavy on his body, the gold braid gleaming, the blue cloth hugging his muscles like second skin. He moved nervously, slippers light on his feet, but the silk hose hot and sticky with perspiration.

"You are nervous, *amigo*," Jose said at his back, and he answered without turning.

"It is this damnable heat," he growled. "*Por Dios*, is there never a time when a man can fight in coolness!"

He knew that Jose shrugged. "You wish snow?" Jose asked. "Ha, what it would be to drop a bull with a snowball."

"*Silencio!*" Manuel said in sudden irritation.

He felt a sudden rush of shame at the harshness of his tone. Jose was his friend, and yet he used the man badly. Too, his bull would come any moment, and no matador could work when temper ruled his mind.

He looked about, hoping Juanito had appeared. They had met for one ageless moment before the parade, and then the boy had vanished to some hidden place. He wanted Juanito to watch the coming kill, and for a second he wondered if the other had become too frightened to fight.

He shrugged at the thought. No Trujillo ran, not even when his heart pounded with sheer terror. A Trujillo could go but one way—forward. But still he worried.

"There is Maria," Jose said in sudden wonder, and Manuel followed the pointing of his hand and saw her low in the stands. Somehow, it shocked him, for after the first year of their marriage she had never entered a *plaza* again.

Then the moment was gone, for the bull was coming in. The crowd sighed in a growing roar, and then the bull erupted from the *toril*, whirling onto the sand, hooking in building rage and suspicion, momentarily confused by the bright sunshine.

The old excitement came. It burst, full-flung, in Manuel, and he could feel the taut grin on his mouth, as he waved Tolugo, the *banderillero* into the ring.

"Double him for me," he called. "Let's see the way he dances."

Tolugo grinned with a flash of white teeth and edged from the safety of the *burladero*. "*Toro!*" he cried "Huh, huh, huh!"

The bull spun, caught by the flaring swing of Tolugo's crimson cape. He snorted and his head came down. His tail went stiff, and he charged the fleet enemy.

Manuel watched. This was but a minor test, a way of seeing which way the bull hooked, right or left, and there was little danger to Tolugo. He liked the bull, though, for it was sleek and deadly, if small. It was a Buarra, a good breed, and it plunged forward, barely hooking to the right. Tolugo passed it three times, then dodged to safety in the *burladero*.

"*Un nino*," he said, laughing. "Even I could bring him down."

"*Banderillas*," Manuel said.

Tolugo shrugged and caught up the barbed darts. He was all sinuous grace as he slipped into the ring again and paced the bull. It charged, bellowing softly, and he passed it right and left, planting the savage little sticks with muscled flicks of his hand. The *banderillas* bobbed brightly in the lumpy shoulders of the bull, and he went into a dancing rage at the insistent nagging torture of the barbs.

The crowd was crying now, calling for him, and Manuel shrugged his uniform into place, stamping his feet, before stepping from concealment. Then he spread the cape and entered the ring.

"*Toro, huh, Toro!*" he cried his mocking challenge, and his foot stamped a challenge on the ground.

The bull heard the cry and came about, seeming to crouch, although it merely gathered muscles for a charge. Reddened eyes glared hatred, and its head went down. Dust was spurned by a hard-driven snort, and its tail was a rigid lifted bar of black.

Then it drove in.

It came straight and true, sighting the cape Manuel spun, leading the bull, and it passed, coming close, its rank smell perfume in his nostrils. He whirled, facing

the bull, and it charged again and again, tiring, and he played it with a casual skill born of a thousand fights. Needle horns swept by his legs, barely a foot away, and he heard the, "Ole! Ole!" of the crowd, even as he worked.

Seconds passed, and then minutes; and when at last the bull paused in agonized bewilderment, he turned his back and walked away, trailing the cape in the dust. Cheers came from the crowd, but he ignored them. Strangely, he was tired of them and the heat and the bull.

One glance he gave to Maria, and she sat silently, withdrawn, as though she were a specter, watching but not taking part. Then he looked away and stepped to safety, throwing the cape to Jose.

"Good, good!" Jose said. "It was pretty."

Manuel didn't answer, taking the *muleta* and the wooden sword into hand and draping the heart-shaped cape carefully over the sword. There was no particular sense of elation, for the bull was not great.

He went into the ring again, and the bull was ready, fresh again, hatred for the man in every rigid muscle of its body. It charged, and he tantalized it with the *muleta*, never letting it gain its desire, holding it away. He toyed with the bull until froth ran at its mouth, until the *banderillas* soaked the shoulders of glossy hair with crimson. He passed it cleverly, veronica, media-veronica, even in the butterfly, half-hiding the cape behind his graceful body.

And when at last he knew the time had come for the kill, he spun away, leaving the bull standing foolishly in the sunlight. He gave the wooden sword to Jose and accepted the blade of Toledo steel. It winked at him in the sunlight, and he hid its length in the cape. Then he went again into the ring and faced the bull for the last time.

THE BULL was tired, but then so was Manuel. They faced each other as men and animals had done for centuries; and it was as if somehow the bull understood that the torture was ended and that this was the final note in a song of death.

It hurtled in, and he passed it with a veronica, turning and waiting. The bull came again, nostrils wide and flared, eyes almost red, its glossy black hide stained with blood. It was magnificent, much more in a way than the man, and for a moment Manuel felt a thread of sympathy turn in his heart.

Then the bull was coming in, and he went backward, using the beautiful butterfly pass, working the bull from side to side with incredible grace. The crowd watched, and its cries pressed into the ring. Blood lust was there, and love of bravery, and a hunger for death.

The cape and sword were heavy, yet Manuel handled them with the daintiness of a silk on a wand. Blood marked his suit where the bull had brushed in passing, and a tiny rent showed where a horn had torn the cloth in a miss which could have, two inches deeper, gutted him like a fish.

He could feel the sweat saturating his skin, and the pigtail clipped to his hair was a dragging weight. The time had come, he knew, for within minutes his strength would not permit the dancing grace which was his only bulwark against death.

He passed the bull, and it ran farther than usual before turning. He threw a glance at Jose, letting him know the kill was at hand, and he saw Juanito. Almost did he grin, and when he whisked the cape from his sword, he dipped its blade a trifle in recognition. Juanito nodded, his intent young face a bit white with strain and anticipation.

"Ho—*Toro!*" Manuel challenged softly, and the bull came wheeling in.

He passed the bull once, and so close were its horns he had to arch his belly backward. He smelled the blood and sweat and terror and hatred of the beast.

It swerved and came back, and he was ready. He lifted and drove with all of his strength, going over the horns and driving the blade in cleanly to its hilt. The bull went past, and he turned to watch. The bull came about, staggered, and then was on its side in a cloud of dust, barely kicking as it died.

Manuel barely heard the cries from the crowd of watchers. Sound burst about him, but he gave little heed. He watched his son, and what he saw pleased him.

And then the *presidente* was dipping his handkerchief—once, twice and three times, for the ears and tail.

He accepted them and made his short parade, bowing.

The bull's body was removed, and Jose cleaned the Toledo sword. The crowd settled a bit, waiting, and Juanito shrugged his heavy gold-braided suit into fit, his lips thinned now and grim, but courage in his eyes.

"Luck, Juanito!" Manuel said from close at hand, and the boy smiled.

"With skill like yours," he said, "I would need no luck."

And then his bull was coming in.

Manuel did not see the bull for a moment. He was seeing his son, watching every movement, seeing every flicker of expression. Maria was there, even more than himself. The mouth was sensitive, the eyes wide and honest. The hair was dark and the shoulders wide. Taller than Manuel, he was a fine figure of a man.

"Flesh of my flesh!" Manuel murmured to himself in slow pride.

And then he saw the bull.

It was Belmonte. It was black as a moonless night, and the hair curled and glistened over muscles which writhed like snakes. It skidded into the arena, snorting and tossing its head, searching for anything to attack. Proudly, boldly, it challenged the world, and in Manuel a worm of fear writhed suddenly.

"My God," Manuel cried to Jose, "he cannot fight that beast. He is a *novillero,* a novice."

Jose shrugged. "That was the bull for Rubirosa; now it is the boy's." But even his face showed his doubts.

"Juanito—" Manuel began, and his voice faded.

For the boy was ready now, face white and stern, but no cowardice in him. He waved in a *banderillero,* and the other sprinted forward, cape flapping.

"Huh, huh, huh, Toro!" the *banderillero* cried, and truly there was no need for the challenge, for the bull was coming in.

The *banderillero* passed the beast twice, and it hooked right and left. Someone had fought this bull in a pasture, and it was ringwise, dangerous.

And then Juanito was in the ring, the *banderillero* barely scrambling to cover over the *barrera.* The bull skidded to a stop, whirling from the wooden barrier and spied Juanito.

It snorted and bunched muscles beneath its shiny hide. It watched from reddened ugly eyes, tail beginning to stiffen and lift for the charge. And then its head came down and it hurtled in, twelve hundred pounds of hooved lightning, horns aching for the kill.

Juanito barely moved, and the bull was passed, whirling in twice its length and coming back. It moved at express-train speed, and the boy barely spun away in time. The cape held on a horn and ripped. Juanito stumbled a bit, thrown off balance.

"Ah, no!" Manuel cried, aloud he thought, but no sound came.

And then Juanito was in balance again, coolly waiting the charge of the Belmonte. There was no smile on his face, only a deadly seriousness. He knew his danger, fo. he had worked bulls before, even though none had gone so great as this. Another man might have retreated, but pride was a part of him, as of his father, and so he stood his ground, spreading the cape of torn crimson.

He passed the bull, and the horn was less than an inch from his leg. Sweat rode his face, but he turned and waited for the inevitable charge.

THE crowd was silent, caught by the deadliness of the drama. They knew the boy was a *novillero,* and so they had expected little more than the killing of a bull which should have been a cow. They had expected nothing like this, and so they held tongue for the moment, wondering, waiting.

"Play him out, Juanito, for the love of our Sainted Mother, play him away from your belly." It was a prayer and a command, but if Juanito heard the words of Manuel, he gave no heed.

The bull came in, only the sounds of its hard hooves to mark his charge. He came straight at the tantalizing cape, heading it—and then twisted his ugly head at the last flicking moment.

He caught the boy with one horn,

caught him beneath the leg and flipped him fifteen feet. A weird cry of agony was torn from the crowd. He landed awkwardly on head and shoulder and lay stunned for a moment. And the bull whirled, searching, seeking.

Manuel never remembered his movement. But even as the boy fell before the bull, Manuel had snatched *muleta* and sword from Jose and was bounding to the ring. He was at the side of the bull, as it turned, and he leaped forward, slashing at its head with the cape.

The bull spun, seeking this new tormentor, forgetting Juanito. It charged, and Manuel barely passed it, working away from the *barrera,* knowing he must have room.

He had no time for more than a quicking glance at his son, and then his attention was on the bull. But he had seen Juanito move; the boy would be all right.

The bull came in, and he passed it, feeling the raking rip of a horn tip on his leg. He smelled the bull and hated the smell then. The bull passed and whirled, and he tried to match the movement, and he knew then that the single blow had partially crippled his leg.

There was no time for terror, no time for thinking. He stood to meet the bull, and rising as best he could, he strove to lift and plant Toledo steel in one swift sinuous movement.

He felt the blade bite deep, and he drove it deeper, searching out the beast's life. And in that instant when the hilt struck hide, he felt the bursting of his own belly flesh from a slashing horn.

He was rising and being flung away, arms and legs without control, feeling no pain as yet, conscious only of a dull wonder at the instant knowledge that he was to die in a ring as his father had.

And then he struck, flung over and over and coming to a stop at last. He saw the bull founder and sink to its knees, then roll over and die; and then the pain rushed in and engulfed him.

Hands caught at him and carried him from where he was, and voices cried out for aid. But he was dying, and he knew it.

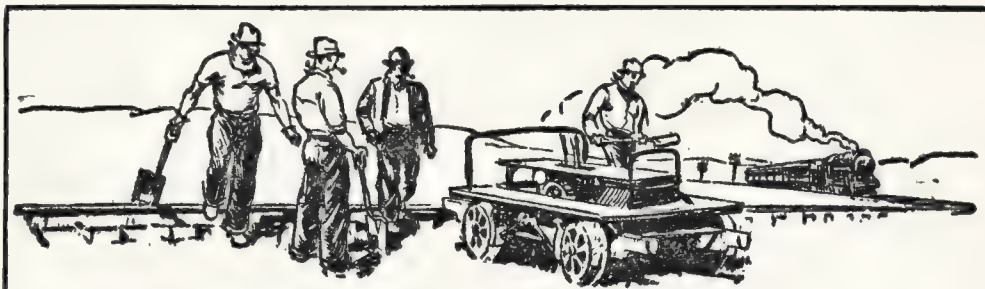
Then the pain was gone as swiftly as it had come, and except that he felt nothing from his navel down, everything was as it had been before.

"A cigarette, *amigo?*" he asked of Jose, and dim irritation came to him that the man should be crying in the sight of strangers.

He drew on the soft smoke, and his gaze went from person to person and found Maria. She was close, and her hand was on his arm. She, too, was crying.

"Enough!" he said roughly. "You have cried enough over me."

(Continued on page 129)



Lincoln Rode Here

AND that's only a small part of the story of the Western Maryland. Freight drags of up to 155 cars—11,800 tons—that's the kind of train the WM runs on its east-west speedway between Baltimore, Md. and Connellsville, Pa. You'll thrill reading how the eastbound coal consists battle their way up 17-mile Black Ford Grade, with one locomotive for every ten cars, in this picture article about one of the nation's most progressive small carriers; in the September issue of

RAILROAD

MAGAZINE

205 East 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y.

NEVER HEARD FROM

By P. H. William Bachmann

Out of the past there floats a ghostly line
Of ships that sailed from Tyre, or the Tyne—
Phoenician galleys, Roman triremes, barques,
Tramp ships and liners, loaded to the marks:
Ships packed with passengers, or costly freight,
From which no word has reached us to this date:
"Vanished at Sea"—the note of sadness slips—
These are the truly lost, the "Never Heard From" ships!

Ships there have been that sank, but men returned,
To say how they had foundered or were burned:
This one was ripped apart on Barrier Reef,
That one blew up not far from Tenerife—
Many there were whose tale was: "Lost at Sea,"
But always there was news for you and me:
One fate alone can make the sailor wince,
A harrowing voice that whispers: "Never Heard From Since!"

"City of Glasgow" out of Liverpool,
For Philadelphia, 1854,
500 souls aboard—not one returned:
What green wave wrote that verdict: "Disappeared!"

White Star's "Noronic," out of Liverpool,
300 settlers now for the New World,
Heading for New York in 1893—

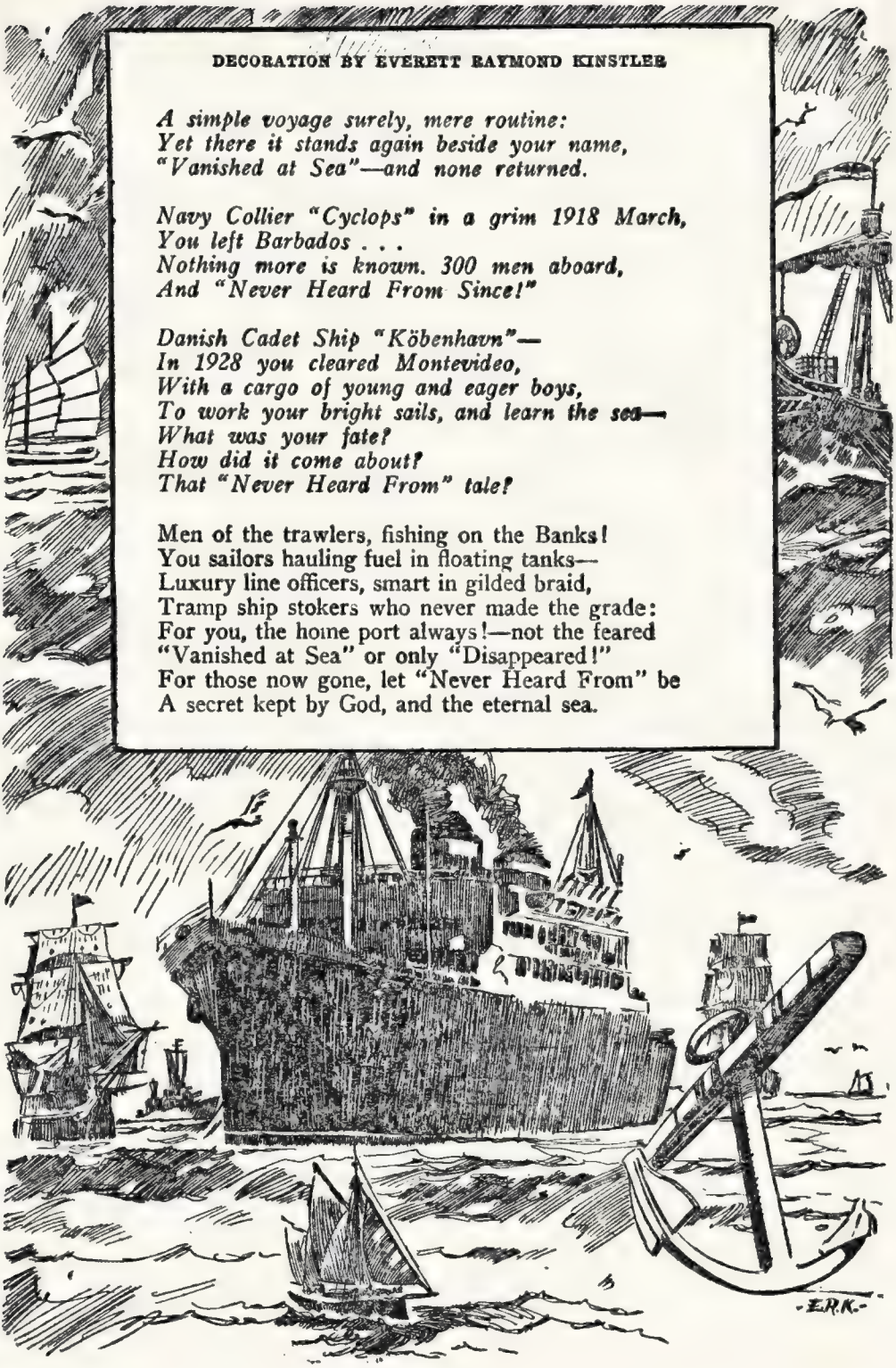
DECORATION BY EVERETT RAYMOND KINSTLER

A simple voyage surely, mere routine:
Yet there it stands again beside your name,
"Vanished at Sea"—and none returned.

Navy Collier "Cyclops" in a grim 1918 March,
You left Barbados . . .
Nothing more is known. 300 men aboard,
And "Never Heard From Since!"

Danish Cadet Ship "Köbenhavn"—
In 1928 you cleared Montevideo,
With a cargo of young and eager boys,
To work your bright sails, and learn the sea—
What was your fate?
How did it come about?
That "Never Heard From" tale?

Men of the trawlers, fishing on the Banks!
You sailors hauling fuel in floating tanks—
Luxury line officers, smart in gilded braid,
Tramp ship stokers who never made the grade:
For you, the home port always!—not the feared
"Vanished at Sea" or only "Disappeared!"
For those now gone, let "Never Heard From" be
A secret kept by God, and the eternal sea.

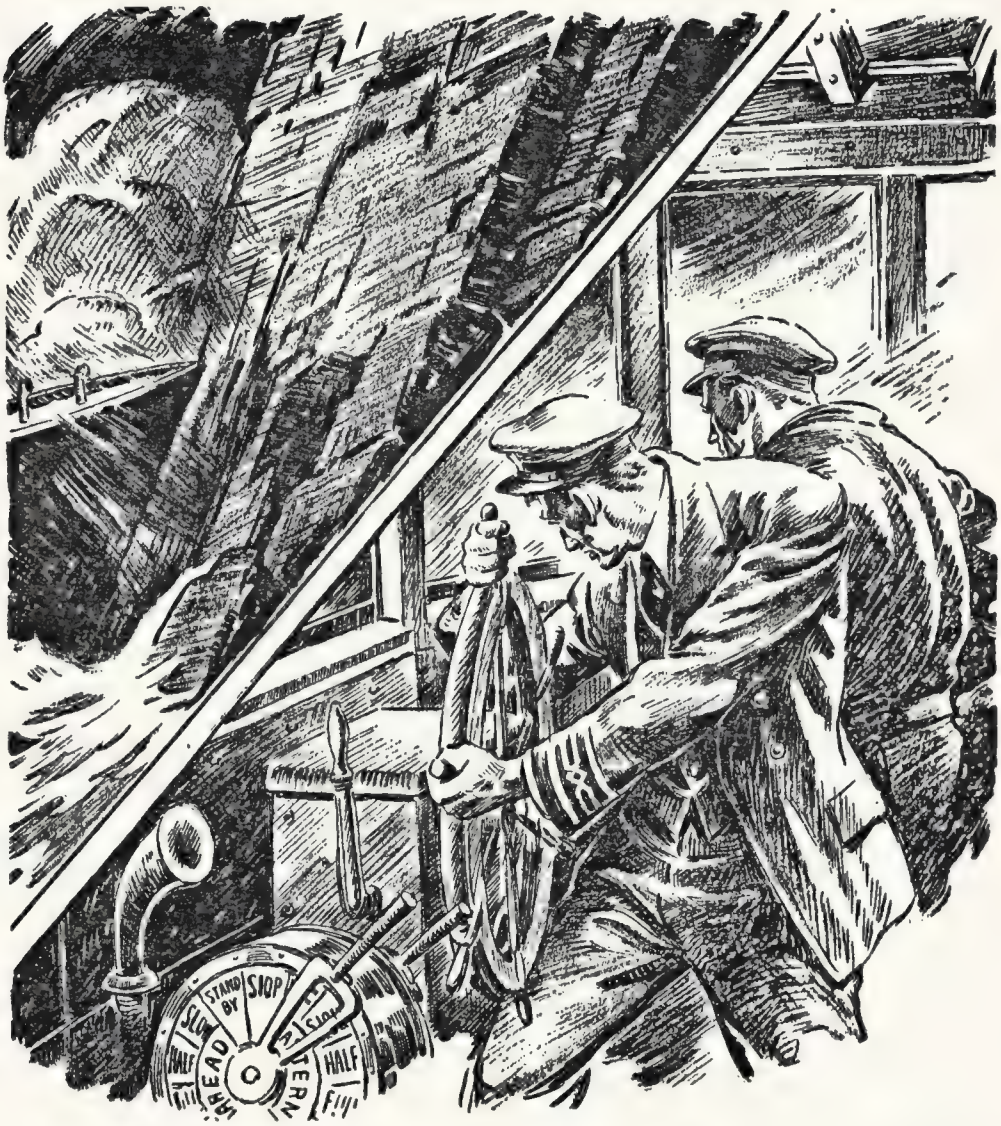


ONE THING A MAN

ILLUSTRATED BY
V. E. PYLES

The engineroom telegraph was still jangling its answer as the Palmyra struck, with the grinding shriek of tearing metal.

NEVER FORGETS



AMONG his fellow seamen Captain Stark of the *S.S. Palmyra* stood out as a brightly plumaged parrot would stand out in a cage of doves. Without their uniforms other Masters might be mistaken for staid businessmen or shopkeepers. Stark could never be taken for anything but a seaman. Nature had presented him with a tall, commanding figure, she had given him penetrating gray eyes set in a strong square-cut face. But Stark improved on Nature. He purposely exposed himself to the sun for long periods so that his face and hands were always deeply tanned, his shoregoing clothes were beautifully cut—always with double

By STANDBY

breasted coats—he wore his hat at a rakish angle and walked with a definite swagger. At sea he kept himself fit with strenous physical jerks so that throughout his life he retained the broad shoulders and slim waist of a trained athlete.

Where other seamen shunned publicity Stark courted it. His very movements as he shouldered his way into a crowded bar shouted "Gangway for a seaman." While you might not like the man you couldn't possibly ignore him. He was too colorful, too vitally alive for that. Meeting him for the first time you felt his gray eyes boring into you, summing you up, reading your secrets before moving on to someone or something more interesting. And in those eyes you saw the restless driving energy of the man, saw the secret behind his record for quick passages in an old ship. With Stark, you quickly realized, there would be no side-stepping of an issue, no taking the easy way. Arrogant, overbearing and boastful he was disliked by nearly everyone who had served under him.

He boasted, with some justification certainly, about his unblemished record, his physical endurance, his ship and her fast passages, always omitting to mention that the *Palmyra* was now far from a new ship. He boasted of his Company though Heaven knows why. The *Palmyra* was owned by an obscure Singapore firm with a somewhat unsavory reputation in shipping circles.

They treated Stark handsomely, however, possibly because they were shrewd enough to realize what an asset his driving energy was to them. In return Stark spoke of them as another man might speak of one of the crack mail lines and he never spared himself in their interests. Long hours and the strain of keeping going in reefbound waters and poor visibility meant nothing to him. Indeed he seemed to thrive on them for in the ten years I had known him he had not aged one day. Age! It was a thing you did not associate with Stark. Impossible to picture this lean, arrogant swaggerer as old or fading. Certainly his tanned face was lined, but the lines were of experience rather than age.

But the time comes when age catches up with the toughest man. It caught up with Stark overnight, leaped on him out of the darkness and rain in waters he knew as well as he knew his way around his own decks.

THE voyage was Batavia to Sydney and until the *Palmyra* entered the Torres Straits it had been uneventful enough. Ordinarily even those narrow, reef-studded waters would have presented no worries for either Stark or his chief officer. Both men knew the Inner Route well, but on this occasion they were unlucky enough to strike the tail end of the wet season. For three days and nights it rained with varying degrees of intensity, three anxious days and nights during which Stark seldom left the bridge and never slept. Another man would have anchored, but to him that would have been an admission of incompetence. Thick though the weather was there were enough gaps in it to enable him to keep going in safety.

Soon after midnight on the third night the rain cleared, but Stark did not turn in until Mr. Walston, his chief officer came on watch at four o'clock. Feeling damnably tired he was glad to see Walston and only too pleased to be handing over to him. Don't think that Stark had any liking for his chief officer. He hated him. He'd taken a dislike to him the day Walston joined the ship, nearly eighteen months ago, and he made no attempt to conceal his feelings.

Walston was not English. His swarthy complexion and his too suave manner indicated that. Moreover he was guilty of the most unpardonable crime, in Stark's eyes, of wearing a mustache, a thin pencil line of black across his upper lip. No British seaman, Stark held, had a right to wear a thing like that. But there was more behind Stark's hatred than mere looks. Walston's uncle was one of the partners of the Company, and always, deep in the back of Stark's mind, was the haunting fear that Walston had been sent to understudy and eventually replace him. That suspicion made him particularly objectionable and overbearing to his chief officer whose only response was the faintest expression of half-smiling tolerance.

There was nothing Stark could do about that expression. It was too indefinite to

be called insolent and Walston was always meticulously polite. A shade too polite perhaps, yet in some subtle way he managed to convey the impression that he was above and impervious to all his captain's insults.

For twelve months Stark waited for his chance. He checked everything his new chief officer did and he took no trouble to hide his distrust. Rather he flaunted it. Just one slip, his manner plainly said, one small slip and I'll have you where I want you. But Walston made no slips. He had learned his seamanship under a good man, he had more than his share of brains and his navigation was faultless. Hating him as he did, Stark was forced ultimately to admit that he'd never seen a better navigator.

The second mate handed over the watch, mumbled "Goodnight" and departed.

"You can take her now, Mister," Stark growled at Walston. "I'm turning in."

"Very good, sir," Walston answered cheerfully. "Nice to see a bit of clear sky again, isn't it, sir?"

Stark's grunt could have meant anything, or nothing. And then, although he knew his chief officer was as familiar with the vagaries of the currents in those waters as he was, he said, "Keep a good check on her. Don't let these currents set her off her course, and have me called at once if it starts to come on thick again." His cabin was just below the bridge and he turned in thankfully.

THE old *Palmyra* plowed steadily southward, her bows lifting and falling gently to an almost imperceptible swell. Around her islands stood in bold relief against the rapidly clearing sky. All easy watch for a man familiar with those waters, but Walston left nothing to chance. He took bearings and "put the ship on the chart" every half hour. In the rough deck log book he entered the slight changes of course that the current forced him to make. In his five o'clock entry he wrote, "Heavy cloud bank and faint lightning ahead." His entries and chartwork were models of neatness and precision.

By 4:30 it was obvious that the cloudbank ahead was developing into one of those early morning tropical deluges. McMahon, the seaman on lookout, pointed to the lighter line of rain under the dark cloud mass and said, "Looks like we're in for a proper deckin', Mister."

"We are," Walston agreed. "Slip aft and get me the log reading while I take some bearings."

Mr. McMahon was a dried-up little Irishman who had ruined himself with heavy drinking. He was either very absentminded or else utterly incapable of concentrating on anything but the simplest tasks. He had even been known to incorrectly report the reading of the patent log.

Walston was waiting at the door of the chartroom when McMahon returned and reported "It's 69.6, sir."

"69.6," Walston repeated. "Right, McMahon, you'd better slip down and call the captain. Tell him it's coming on to rain." Already the first big drops were spattering down. He was about to step into the chartroom when he said, "Wait a minute. You said 69.6. That can't be right. Stay here and keep a sharp lookout while I check that. I'll call the captain myself while I'm below."

He slid agilely down the ladder and a few moments later he was back alongside McMahon. "I knew damned well you were wrong," he said. "Why the hell can't you ever do things properly? That reading was 66.9."

"S'help me, Mister—" Stung by the sneer in the mate's voice McMahon was starting to defend himself, but Walston cut him short.

"Save it," he snapped. "Captain Stark's on his way up. You can explain it to him." He stepped into the chartroom and made a rapid entry, *5:32. Heavy rain ahead. Visibility decreasing. Called Master.* Alongside his plotted position on the chart he wrote, *Log 66.9. Speed 10 knots.* There was nothing slipshod about Walston's navigation. Pulling on his oilskin he took up his position on the opposite end of the bridge from McMahon. The rain was heavier now but he could still see the nearer islands.

Ten minutes later it was pouring down in torrents, blotting out every sign of land. Without a breath of wind to drive

it aslant it tumbled straight down in endless streams, pouring from the scuppers and churning the sea alongside to foam. Anxiously straining their eyes Walston and McMahon could make out nothing beyond the watery blur that was their own fo'castle head.

"You'd better slip below and give the captain another call." Walston was alongside McMahon now, shaking his arm and half shouting to make himself heard above the heavy drumming of the rain. "He must have gone to sleep after I called him. Tell him it's raining like hell." He moved away and jerked the handle of the engine-room telegraph to "Stand by."

Captain Stark came up the bridge ladder ahead of McMahon. "Why the hell wasn't I called before?" he bellowed.

"I called you, sir, about fifteen minutes ago," Walston explained. "I thought you must have fallen asleep again so I sent McMahon down."

"You called me! What the blazes are you trying to ram down my neck?"

"I assure you, sir—"

"Shut up. I'll go into that later. Where are we?"

"She was right on her course at 5:30, sir, just before the rain started. Another half hour should bring us abreast of Pheasant Island. There was no shipping in sight but I rang 'Stand by', sir. I thought you'd be slowing her down."

"So you're doing my thinking for me now!" The anger in Stark's voice changed to sarcasm. "I don't doubt you're hoping to get this command some day, Walston, but at present I'm giving the orders. Understand?" He strode to the telegraph and slammed the pointer to "Full Ahead" before stepping into the chartroom.

How typical of the man that action was! Without Walston's suggestion he might have slowed down; heaven knows the rain was thick enough. But now, even the very real risk of a head-on collision with a north bound ship wouldn't induce him to slacken speed.

BENDING over the chart table he carefully studied Walston's positions on the chart and checked his calculations for speed. For the last hour, he noted, the current had been setting the ship inshore and to counteract that set Walston had twice altered course to port. The last alteration had been sufficient for the 5:30 position showed her to be right on her course. In half an hour, at her present speed of 10 knots, she would pass between Pheasant Island and Cormorant Rocks with the island two miles distant on the port hand and Cormorant Rocks nearly three miles off on the starboard. And, following the sound principle of hugging the most prominent danger, that was as it should have been. Pheasant Island was bald, rocky and steep-to, a prominent land mark; Cormorant Rocks were treacherous, hidden dangers, awash at half tide completely covered at high water.

Captain Stark tossed his pencil aside and stepped out onto the darkened bridge. Walston's plotted positions and concise entries had given him a clear picture of the ship's movements and present position. Most important of all was the fact that the current was setting him towards a hidden danger. Instinctively he shied away from it. By steering a few more degrees to port he would pass closer to, but still well clear of the island—well over a mile from it if he kept going. He gave the helmsman the order immediately.

But headstrong thruster though he was Stark had no intention of barging blindfold between the two dangers ahead. He could afford to keep on for twenty minutes —no longer. If Pheasant Island didn't show up by then he'd anchor and wait for the rain to clear off.

"Get ready to anchor," he snapped at Walston. "And keep a sharp lookout for Pheasant Island from up for'ard."

To McMahon he said, "You should see an island on the port bow shortly. It's high and rocky. Keep your eyes skinned and let out a yell as soon as you see it."

A useless order, he reflected. Neither he nor McMahon could see one yard beyond the faint outline of the fo'castle head. Sheet lightning was flickering through the storm now, but it did nothing to improve the visibility. Rather it tended, by lighting up the objects within the ship, to blind the watchers to what lay ahead.

Walston and the carpenter climbed to the fo'castle head and bent over the windlass, two vague figures, wraith-like and

unreal. One straightened up and moved for'ard, right into the eyes of the ship—Walston keeping a lookout, for what it was worth. If a north bound vessel leaped out of that rain the two ships would be tearing each other apart before Walston had finished his warning shout. Stark allowed himself a moment's satisfaction from the knowledge that his chief officer would undoubtedly be killed if such a crash occurred.

Fifteen of Stark's allotted twenty minutes crawled past and still the rain showed no sign of easing. "I'm letting go," he informed McMahon. "Slip aft and get the log line in."

McMahon never obeyed that order. Walston's frantic shout of "Full astern, sir! Full astern!" came as he was turning away. Even as he shouted the warning Walston and the carpenter were racing aft, running madly from the danger they alone had seen.

Full astern! What a feeble, futile gesture! The danger must have been close for Walston to see it, and it takes time, an appalling length of time, to halt several thousand tons of deadweight slipping through the water at ten knots. The engineroom telegraph was still jangling its answer as the *Palmyra* struck, struck with the grinding shriek of tearing metal, the agonized scream of a mortally wounded ship. Her bows lifted, she lurched over to starboard and crashed to a stop, her reversed propeller churning the water under her counter in a boiling flurry of useless power. And high above her masthead, blurred, faint and shadowy through the downpour, towered the rocky cliffs of Pheasant Island.

From the dry warmth of the fo'castle half clad men came tumbling in a mad scramble. Like motley soaking hens they clustered along the high port bulwarks as as if hoping their combined weight would bring their ship back to an even keel. Sodden and thoroughly scared they stared upwards to the dim outline of the bridge, anxiously awaiting their captain's first order.

BUT it was their chief officer who took charge, who ordered the boats to be swung out and advised the men to salvage their personal gear. It was Walston who made the rounds with the carpenter, sounding the wells and establishing the fact that the *Palmyra* was doomed. Holed for more than half her length she was resting on a sloping rock ledge and listing at an ever increasing angle with the mounting flood tide. It was Walston who gathered up the ship's papers, the charts, the deck log containing all the evidence, and even the scribbling pad on which he'd jotted the bearings taken during his watch. Though there was a tense excitement, at times approaching panic, among the crew Walston remained the perfect chief officer throughout, calm, methodical and thoroughly competent, as if abandoning a rapidly sinking ship was an every day routine.

And during the whole anxious period Captain Stark was like a man sleepwalking. He gave no orders, scarcely acknowledged his officer's reports. He questioned Walston dazedly about times and positions during his watch and the chief officer answered in the manner of a patient mother

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Fidgeting, nose-picking and a tormenting rectal itch are often telltale signs of Pin-Worms . . . ugly parasites that medical experts say infest *one out of every three* persons examined. Entire families may be victims and not know it.

To get rid of Pin-Worms, these pests must not only be killed, but killed in the large intestine where they live and multiply. That's exactly what Jayne's P-W tablets do . . . and here's how they do it: *First*—a scientific coating carries the tablets into the bowels before they dissolve. *Then*—Jayne's modern, medically-approved ingredient goes right to work—*kills* Pin-Worms quickly and easily.

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explaining things to a sick and fretful child. At any other time Stark would have shown his resentment of the tone by an outburst of blasting abuse. Now he seemed not to notice it and merely nodded when Walston excused himself to superintend the launching of the boats before the list got too heavy. No longer was he the assured, masterful seaman; he was dazed and broken, a man living in the past while his despised chief officer was taking care of the future.

Once Stark roused himself sufficiently to make his way aft along the sloping deck to study the patent log. Its motionless pointers confirmed Walston's entries. According to them the *Palmyra* was three miles from Pheasant Island, yet here she lay, perilously clinging to its outer rock ledge, threatening at any moment to overturn and slide off into deep water. Limp as the log line that trailed slackly over the stern Stark clung there, staring at those pointers. He wasn't questioning them. He'd given up questioning anything. It was as if the jagged rocks that had wrecked his ship had pierced his ego and let all his colossal energy and self confidence flow out, leaving him utterly bewildered, incapable even of grasping the fact that he, the infallible Captain Stark, had slammed his ship straight into a solid rock wall. Before the disaster he'd been arrogantly certain that he had not been called before the rain started. Now he could only remember that he'd been damnably tired when he turned in.

"It's time you were leaving her, sir," the efficient Walston told him patiently. "The hands are in the boats. Everyone's accounted for and we're ready to cast off. I'm afraid she'll turn over shortly."

In bright sunlight they lounged in the lifeboats and watched the old *Palmyra* go. The sea, except for the gentle surge against the cliffs, was glassy calm, so calm that when she finally rolled over and disappeared the boiling turmoil of her going rocked the surface for hundreds of yards around.

FOUR hours later Captain Johnstone in the *Orkabie* picked them up. He'd known Stark intimately for years, but he scarcely recognized him as he clambered awkwardly up from the lifeboat. The Stark he knew was ageless, indestructible in his vigorous arrogance; this man was old and feeble. The gray eyes were listless, almost unseeing. The mouth that used to clamp in to such a hard, aggressive line now hung slackly, sagging at the corners so that a thin thread of saliva dribbled over his unshaven chin. His broad shoulders drooped dejectedly and he shuffled where once he would have swung with a vigorous stride, making the steel deck plates ring under his heels.

Captain Johnstone took him up to his cabin, poured him a drink and literally drugged the story out of him. As if feeling the futility of discussing the subject Stark answered all questions reluctantly. He was solely to blame, he said. The ship was in his hands when she struck, had been for nearly twenty minutes. He had given the order that doomed her. No, it was useless talking over the matter. He'd been guilty of a grave error of judgment and that's all there was to it.

"My God, Johnstone," he finished passionately. "Can't you see I don't want to talk about it? All my life I've courted publicity, and now, when I *don't* want it, I won't be able to dodge it. This affair will be headline news. I can't even lose my ship like an ordinary man. If it had been a collision or even a submerged danger like Cormorant Rocks it wouldn't be so bad. But to slam her head-on into a damned island five hundred feet high!" He buried his face in his hands.

Captain Johnstone refused to let up. In the back of his mind was a half-formed theory and in spite of Stark's pleas he was going to prove or disprove it. He studied the *Palmyra's* chart and he went carefully over all Walston's entries in the deck log.

"I say it's impossible, Stark," he declared at last.

For the first time since he boarded the *Orkabie* Stark smiled, a ghastly twisted caricature of a smile. "That's what I said," he agreed. "It took me quite a while to convince myself. But she's gone, Johnstone. I sat in the lifeboat and watched her go."

"No, no." Captain Johnstone tapped the chart and the *Palmyra's* deck log with his pencil. "I know she's gone, but there's a lot here I don't understand. Your ship's

been averaging a steady ten knots, she's setting inshore, then suddenly her speed jumps to more than twelve and she crabs sideways for over a mile in the *opposite* direction. How? Why?"

"A sudden change of current must have caused it. They're damned tricky on that part of the coast. *You* know that. And a lump of seaweed might have been fouling the log. If it was heavy enough it could stop it working for a few miles, until it cleared itself." Stark's tone was completely disinterested. Plainly he wanted to close the subject.

"It's possible," Captain Johnstone admitted. "But I still don't believe it. What about this mate of yours, Stark, this chap Walston? Are you quite sure of him?"

Stark ran a trembling hand through his hair. "Look, Johnstone," he said, "I've told you I don't like the man; I never did like him from the minute he walked aboard. But I've got to give him his due. He was a damned smart navigator—as good as I've seen and I've seen a few. Another thing I've got to admit is that after we struck he proved himself a cool, competent seaman. And that's more than I can say for myself."

"Right. I'll take your word for that. Now just supposing the *Palmyra* averaged eleven knots during the whole of Walston's watch. Current could have accounted for that just as it could have set her steadily *out.*"

"But it didn't. Look at Walston's positions. Work her speed out for yourself."

"I have. But supposing Walston deliberately faked those entries?"

Stark snapped rather irritably, "Don't talk rot, Johnstone. Why would any man do a thing like that?"

"He might have had a very good reason. Look at it this way. Your *Palmyra* was an old ship. She must have been about due for a survey and a pretty extensive overhaul?"

"Overdue," Stark admitted. "We were to dry dock after this voyage."

"It would cost your owners a nice packet, wouldn't it? Oh, I know they've treated you well, Stark. You're fond of boasting about them, but you must admit they've got a shady reputation. If they did decide the *Palmyra* wasn't worth the money they'd have to spend on her and they wanted to get rid of her—for the insurance—Walston would be an ideal man for the job. He's related to the firm and he appears to have the brains and the ability to put the thing over."

"You're letting your imagination run away with you. That's barratry, a damned serious charge. Walston wouldn't be crazy enough to stick his neck out like that."

"*Is* he sticking it out? It seems to me it's *your* neck that's sticking out. What's the Court going to decide when they're told that you went to sleep after you were called and that you were on the bridge for nearly twenty minutes before she struck? Walston could prove that he rang 'Stand by' ready for slowing down and that you slammed her back to 'Full Ahead.' He'd tell 'em you altered the course he had her on, and you'd plead guilty to everything. You wouldn't say one word in your own defense. Your very looks would damn you. Take a look at yourself in that mirror."

As if already feeling the blow falling Stark fingered his neck tenderly. "You needn't rub it in," he growled.

"I'm trying to wake you up," Captain Johnstone told him. "Trying to make you do something to save yourself. If I'm right in my guess, that log was tampered with. Someone moved the pointers back. What about calling in the fellow who read it at 5:30? He might be able to help us."

IN SPITE of Stark's protests that the man was the most unreliable witness in his entire crew McMahon was sent for. When he came shuffling in it was Captain Johnstone who questioned him, doing his best to put the little Irishman at ease.

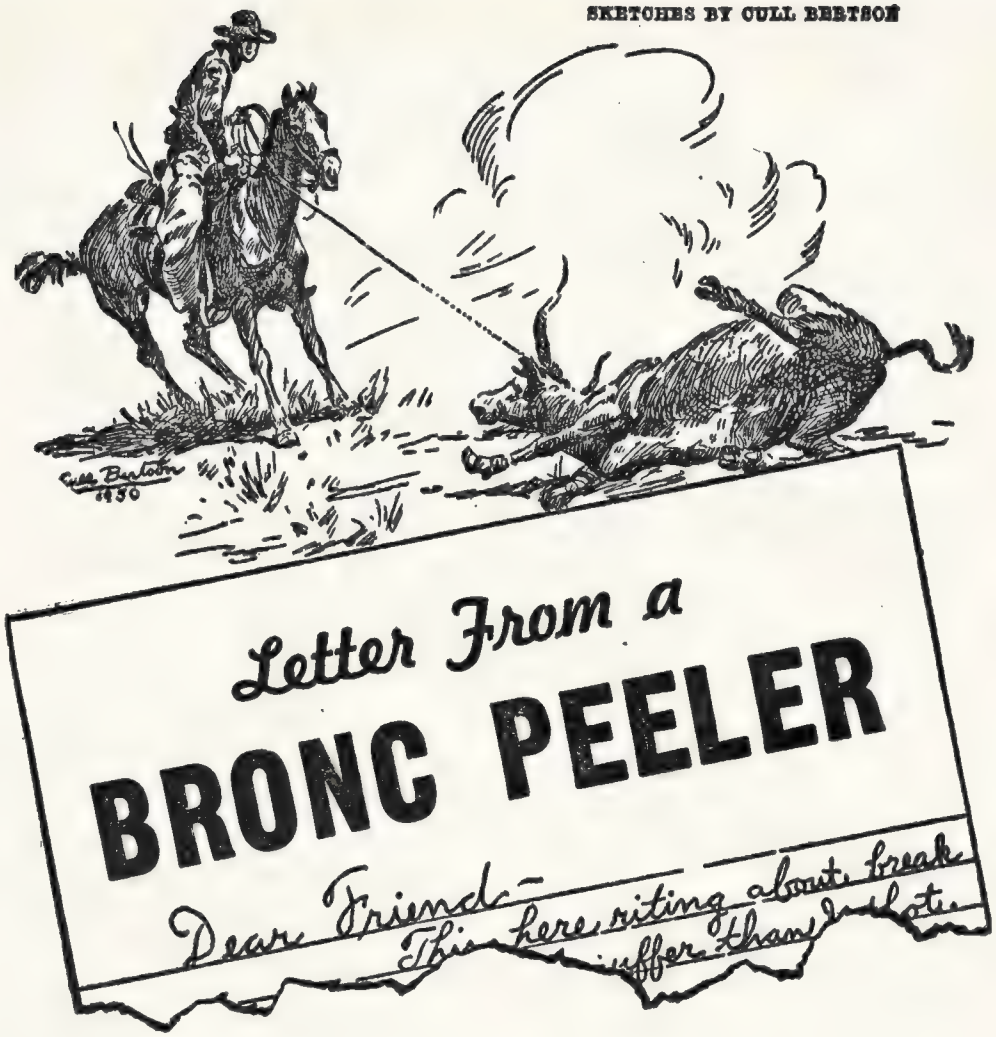
"I don't suppose you'd remember what the log was showing the last time you were sent to read it, would you?" he asked.

"I do that." McMahon's tone was truculent. "I'll tell ye now, Cap'n, same as I told that bloody mate at the time. It was 69.6."

"Aren't you getting it mixed?" Captain Johnstone suggested mildly. He tapped Walston's entry with his pencil. "It's shown here as 66.9."

(Continued on page 127)

SKETCHES BY CULL BEETSON



Dear Friend—

This here riting about breaking a colt is a heap tuffer than I thot. I am sure a tender-foot with a pen and it would be a damn site easyer to show you than to tell you how I go about breaking a colt. Maybe if I throw in a pickter or two your readers will savvy.

Before a green range colt can throw and hold down a big steer (like the one is doing in the drawing at the top of this letter) he has got to get his self a right smart eddication. Nobody ever did call us horse-breakers PROFESSER but I reckon we are teachers. We all do things a little different and we don't agree any better than the Republicans and Democrats do. Smoky Miller learned me and he learned from a California Mexican, Juan Domingues. I can only tell you how I do it. My way works out O. K. for me. A bronc peeler for a big cow spread generally only takes off the rough edges on a colt and then turns him over to a cowboy to finish up. I don't work thataway.

First off—is the colt. I don't mess around with any crowbaits. I want a colt three to four year old and I want him Big. 1000 pounds or better. He has to be able to handle his self fast. I like a mountane razed colt what is used to running in the rockie ruff hills. A pasture razed colt will fall all over his self when you are chaseing a steer threw the brush. I am plumb scary of them.

Suppose I got a colt like this—that is—I got him or he has got me—anyway we are both on the ends of a rawhide riatta (rope) 60 feet apart. Now right here is the most important part—getting him halter broke so he will lead. More man-killers have been made learning them to lead than any other way. First off—I take a couple of turns with the riatta round the snubbing post in the center of the corral and slowly work him up to it. Don't let him rare back and hurt his self. Give him slack if he tries it. Just don't scare the hell out of him. Fool him—let him get the idea that a human being aint so bad after all—he will get dis-illushioned soon enuff. As soon as I can rub his head and ears without him going plumb loco—I slip a hackamore on him instead of a halter.

I set the hackamore up farely tite under his jaw and slip the riatta threw it. Now I aint just pulling his neck and I got better control. I let him loost from the snubbing post and start learning him to lead. I sure as hell can't pull a thousand pounds of spooky colt to me but I can turn him when he starts to run from me. Every time he gets notions about going some where I jerk him around to face me. Never jerk him unless he is trying to get away. Pull him easy toward you and cluck to him. Pretty soon he will come a step or two your way. Be damn patient with him and pretty quick he will lead. Some fellers use a whip or small rock and hit him everytime he brakes away and then jerk him round. I admitt that a whip or rock broke horse leads sooner. But I never seen one that wuddent mistake a movement of your arm for the signel to come to you. A horse looks rite cute running up to you and putting his head over your shoulder ever time you raze a arm. That may be O. K. in the moving pickters but it is damn redickulus if your horse is holding down a ornery old steer, whilst you are working on it and he mistakes some movement of yours and insted of holding back on the rope, he comes and puts his head over your shoulder. A steer don't wait for a second chance and if your lucky enuff to find a tree to clime up, you can set up there, whilst the steer paws the dust on the ground below you. I will bet a top-horse again a plugged nikel that you are plumb cured of whip broke horses before long.

Now my colt leads pretty good. I can get my hands on him and he figgers I am some sort of damn fool who went to all this trouble just to pet a horse. I snub him to the snubbing post and start getting him used to the saddle. I let him smell it and snort at it until he decides there aint nothing to be scared of. I fiddle round with him till I can get the saddle on his back. I only cinch it on litely just enuff to keep it on him. Let him stand at the snubbing post and get used to the feel of the rig. Lead him around the corral awhile. The time that this takes is diffirent with each horse anywhere from one to three days. Sometimes I do all this alone but it is easyer if I got a helper.

Next day is ruff for me and the colt. I start out the same way working the saddle onto him. I set it high on his withers and cinch it up lite at first and then a little titer till I am sure it will stay there if I can. I set the hackamore up tite on his jaw and by now he is tender enuff to feel a pull on it. I get on a well broke horse and lead the colt out to the open. We gallop around and sometimes he bucks a little but mostly he saves it for me. Soon as he has worked off some of his bronc ideas I get my helper up on the gentel horse and I get on the colt. The helper holds him up tite till I get

Let him get the idea a human being aint so bad after all—he will get dis-illushioned soon enuff.

. . . If your lucky enuff to find a tree to clime up . . .

screwed down snug in my saddle. Now it is up to the colt to show his hand. All the helper does is keep us out of fences, gullies etc. If the colt wants to buck I let him buck. I don't spur or quirt him. I just set there as good as I can and holt his head as well as I can till he gets it out of his sistem. Colts is all different. Some never buck, some buck two or three days when you first get on them. One mare I broke bucked every morning for seven months before she quit. I called her Sufraget.

As soon as the wild west show is over, we get to work. I pull him one way or the other till he turns and goes where I want him to. I call this the Gee Haw stage. I pull on one rane and lay the other acrost his neck so he will get the idea of neck-raneing. This takes several days or ridings as I generally break more than one colt at a time. To speed up his raneing I use a quirt with two wide poppers on it.

I holt the ranes in my left hand and holt the quirt in my rite hand. When I lean my wayte to the left and rane him to the left I hit him a smart lick with the quirt on the rite side of his neck. This makes him spin to the left. Same idea for turning to the rite cept I hit him on his rite rump insted of the neck. This kind of quirt don't hurt him none. It just makes a loud pop and speeds up his turning a heap. I keep after him till he can spin like a top. Oncst he has learned this it ain't much of a trick to make him rane good at a dead run. I try to learn my horses to run on a slack rane with thair head down where they can see where they are going. A horse may look almighty handsome with his head up in the air but I'll be damned if he can see a prairie dog hole from that angle.

The hackamore helps make a horse carry his self thisaway, as all the pull on his head comes from the same spot under his jaw and he neckranes better than if he learned from the pull of a bit on each side of his mouth. It also makes him stop quick with a easy slide insted of jarring hell out of you, stopping on his front feet. If this don't work let his hoofs go tender in front and shoe him behind. Dammed if he will stop hard on tender front feet.

One thing I want in a cow horse is a fast walk. I don't let my colt trot a step unless he is one of those very soft fox-trotters. I only walk or lope them. Oncst when I was in New York I see some people riding horses in the park at a hard milk wagin trot. They were a-bouncing up and down in great style. That may be great stuff for exersize but when a man has to work all day on top of a horse, dammed if he don't have to have some

If the colt wants to buck, I let him buck.

I'll be damned if he can see a prairie dog hole with his head up in the air.

regard for the condishun of his rear-end.

This here colt has took about three weeks to get him this far. It's bout time he went to work for a living so I start right out working cattle with him. He learns a heap about raneing, stopping on a dime and spinning as we head off some contrary cow critter that has took notions. I fiddle around a lot with my riatta. I get him used to it swinging alongside his head till he pays it no mind. One day I see a muley steer, not too big, just a yearling. Now is the time to learn my colt about roping. I run my riatta threw the hackamore and tie it hard and fast to the saddle horn. Then we take out after the muley and I rope him around the neck. I stop the colt and step off him. I go find me a piece of shade to set under and I roll a smoke and watch that yearling steer learn my colt how to be a rope horse. That colt aint no dummy. By the time that yearling has jerked him around by the nose a couple a times, the colt has learned to face him and take the jolt on the saddle insted of his sore jaw. I let him learn this here lesson so he won't never forget it. I get back on him and slip the rope out of the hackamore. We run up on the steer and I flip my riatta over his rear-end and then we run past him and bust him good. When my colt feels the jolt on the saddle-horn he turns and faces the steer. He has learned his lesson well. I get off and let the steer up. We practise this plenty, every time we get the chanst. On someone else's steer of course.

About now it is time to put a bridle on my colt. I use a Spanish bit with a roller but I don't put no ranes on it yet. Just let him get the feel of it in his mouth for a spell. As soon as I figger that his jaw is getting callused and the hackamore don't handle him too good, I put ranes on the bit. Very slow I shift from the hackamore to the bit. Some horses I never did use a bit on. I always ride with spurs but I use them plumb careful. I save them for when I need a extra turn of speed.

Well then—this here colt is broke. If I had knowed what a job it was to do on paper, damned if I would'nt a packed my bed-roll and drifted. I never knowed anybody that follered this way of breaking a colt that didn't have right good luck.

I only got 2 rules for breaking a colt—

No. 1—Don't try and learn a colt nothing when he is too hot and tired to learn.

No. 2—BE AS SMART AS A HORSE.

Your friend,
Cull Bertson

I watch that yearling steer learn my colt how to be a rope horse.

BORN TO FIGHT

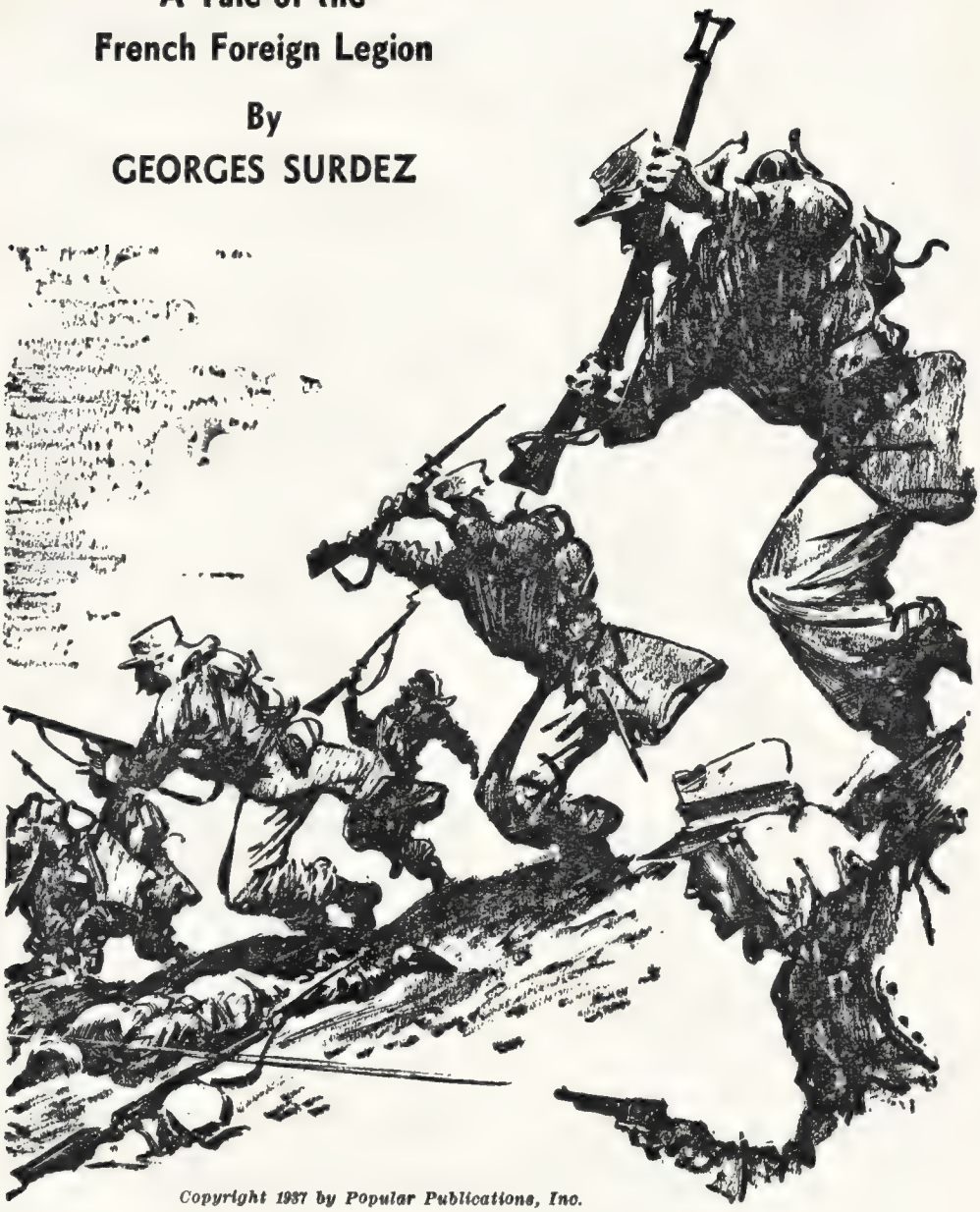
ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK KRAMER

The groups left in reserve charged over the crest and came galloping down with a great shout. Their appearance melted the last resistance.

A Tale of the French Foreign Legion

By

GEORGES SURDEZ



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ONE of us has to go. I'll kill him." Forester looked at his comrade. Peterschen sat on the cot in the small room he occupied alone, as senior-sergeant, in the non-commissioned officers' quarters of the barracks at Dar-Oukil, Saharan Territories. He seemed very calm and spoke of murdering a superior in a quiet, matter-of-fact voice. A gigantic man, with red hair and clear blue eyes, his face was that of a handsome boy.

But it was wise to remember that he was nearing thirty, had served with the French Foreign Legion a long time, knew the meaning of the word *kill*.

"You'll kill him," the American sergeant conceded. "That should be easy. Then what?"

He was not a youngster himself, but a large, muscular, sun-seasoned professional soldier. He had served in two other armies, had knocked about the globe for years, and had gathered a knowledge of men. So that he did not dismiss his friend's threat lightly.

"Then what?" Peterschen repeated, surprised by the question: "Then it will be settled, over. Think I can go on like this? He just slapped two days' confinement to quarters on me to keep me here tonight. You know that."

"That's probable." Forester puffed at his cigarette, smiled faintly. His voice changed to a sort of solemn chant: "The time has come, Peterschen. Have courage. A glass of rum? A cigarette?"

As Peterschen looked at him, Forester imitated a dirge-like muffled beating of drums. And the big fellow identified that gloomy throbbing, remembered that the statement, the questions were addressed to men about to be executed.

"What do I care?" He tried to grin carelessly. "We all have to take the hop some time."

"Military degradation, the firing-squad," Forester continued. "By that time, the lieutenant will have been dead for months. But you'll have lived long enough to find out that your girl was keeping company with some new guy. You'll not only be shot, but you'll feel like an ass when you are shot. That may hurt."

Peterschen's enormous fists balled up; he glared at Forester. But he did not strike out. He was eager to vent his rage on some one, but he knew that underneath the sarcastic, bantering tone there was genuine concern. The two had been close friends for years.

"We love each other, Nick. You can't understand—"

"No. I'm too old, or too young, or something," the American shrugged. "I couldn't understand about that girl in the cigarette factory in Oran, about that jane in a Meknes dance hall. Cheer up, you'll love the next one just as much."

"It's different with this one. We're going to get married."

"Not if you kill Doberon, you won't!" Forester pointed out.

Peterschen rose and paced about the small room. His long, thick fingers reached for the butt of a thirty-eight automatic pistol protruding from a holster hung from a peg in the white-washed wall. His whole body quivered with helpless fury. Finally he threw himself face down on the cot. Forester lighted a fresh cigarette and settled in a chair.

He appeared casual, but he was alert, ready to step between his friend and the door. He had known Peterschen to go from fits of depression and despair into a blind, incoherent, killing rage. If he reached a certain pitch of temper, the senior-sergeant was quite likely to locate the lieutenant and empty a magazine into his body without further argument.

IT had started three months before. Their battalion of Legion had marched into the triple column of khaki swinging behind blaring bugles and pounding drums. Not an important center commercially, with its two avenues, eight streets and three hundred European civilians, Dar-Oukil was a tactical position for the control of the region.

The battalion detached small detachments to the blockhouses and military posts of the vicinity, and was ordered to keep one of its remaining companies ready to answer a radio alarm and start in pursuit of Berber raiders.

Aside from the Hotel de France, frequented by the officers, there were three cafes catering to the troops. The largest of these was *Le Mazagran,* owned by Monsieur Metayer, a round, short, middle-aged man whose nose proved that he sampled his merchandise. His wife did the cooking for those customers who wished a meal; his brother and his son tended bar. There was a fifth member in that industrious family who appeared to have no definite occupation in life beyond fascinating the soldiery.

In that remote Saharan hamlet, Josephine Metayer was as incongruous, as startling as a grand piano in a stable. She was nineteen, had returned recently from a fashionable school in France. She was a tall, slender, dark girl, who could be called beautiful rather than pretty. Her trim body seemed to have been turned out on a lathe by an inspired artisan, so well-proportioned were her curves, so graceful her bearing.

Josephine never entered the public rooms of the cafe. But she was seen around town, wearing flimsy, bright colored, dainty frocks from Paris, each one of which undoubtedly represented the alcoholic consumption of a Legion company for several days.

Naturally, there was an immediate scramble for her attention. The competition was limited to the non-commissioned men at first; the Metayers, who kept a bar, did not move in the highest social sphere—in that heaven where reigned the administrator, the collector of taxes, the major and their ladies. It must be understood that the Metayers dealt in liquor not as manufacturers nor even as wholesalers, but as retailers.

Peterschen, who had a justified reputation as a ladies' man, set to work and made rapid progress. He was conspicuous because of his size and handsome face, looked splendid in a white uniform stiff with starch, ornamented by gold chevrons, gold buttons and the impressive array of seven decorations. Before the battalion had been in town a fortnight he was dining with the Metayer family, in the private room near the kitchen.

This could not last, naturally! Word spread among the bachelor and unattached officers that there was "a classy dame" at *Le Mazagran*. Most grew discouraged after a short space, but Lieutenant Doberon was persistent.

He was a blond, tall young man, very good-looking, just over twenty-five and reputed to be due for promotion to captain in the near future, consequently for a fine career in the service. His uniforms were admired by the troopers, copied by the sergeants, envied by his colleagues.

At first all thought that courting Josephine was an amusement for him; then it was learned that he had asked her hand from Metayer.

Josephine herself, when consulted, revealed that she had allowed Peterschen to hope, on condition that he kept sober for a year and obtained promotion. The sergeant, a hard-drinker for years, dutifully kept to wines and soft drinks. It took a brand of heroism for a man with his reputation to be seen toying with a glass of seltzer and grenadine.

A feud started between the lieutenant and the sergeant, watched by several hundred interested, gossipy spectators. The Legionnaires of the battalion held Doberon in high esteem, would have followed him through hell. But they conceded that he took the old saying that all is fair in love and war somewhat too literally. Shamelessly, he started to "ride" Peterschen. He remained soft-spoken and polite, but lost no chance to punish him. It became increasingly difficult for the senior-sergeant to leave the barracks.

Peterschen would be waiting eagerly for the bugle, expecting to spend the evening with Josephine, chaperoned by her mother. The lieutenant would speak suddenly.

"Sergeant, there's an error in your ledger. Better stick on the job tonight and find it. One should never be too absorbed in outside activities you know."

"Some people manage to get away with it, Lieutenant."

"I'd be inclined to permit that remark to pass," Doberon would continue with a bored air. "Unfortunately, I am an officer and must exact respect for my stripes. Sergeant, put yourself down for two days' confinement to quarters, with the motive: 'Insolence.' "

And while his rival fretted in his room, Doberon would don his newest uniform, parade across the yard, acknowledging the sentry's salute with a cheerful wave of the riding-crop clasped in white-gloved hand. He was calling on the Metayers!

There he would eat an excellent dinner, drenched by many glasses of vintage wines, continue his courtship with brilliant little compliments, respectful glances of admiration.

"We haven't seen Mr. Peterschen today, Mr Doberon," Madame Metayer would be sure to ask, with deliberate want of tact. "I do hope he is not sick."

Doberon would speak without looking up from his plate, as if grieved by what he had to say.

"He is punished. Minor lapse in his duties." The young officer would shake his head sadly. "A marvelous character, that Peterschen! Extravagantly brave, but wild and not very dependable. But we never judge our Legionnaires: We never know what happened in their past to motivate their erratic behavior."

Although Doberon failed to make marked progress with Josephine, he conquered the rest of the family. The thought

that their daughter might become the wife of this prosperous, well-connected young officer surpassed their fondest expectations. It was rumored even, that provided a cousin passed away, Doberon's spouse would some day be able to have a coronet engraved on her visiting-card!

Before long Metayer made it clear to Peterschen that he was no longer a privileged guest and that his place was with the cash customers in the public rooms. This hurt the sergeant not merely in his love for Josephine but in his personal pride. Something was being put over on him, and he could do nothing about it! That is, nothing sane, nothing safe!

Forester knew that he had had an appointment with Josephine for this very evening. The lieutenant, probably informed by her parents, had punished Peterschen again, using a defective piece of mechanism in one of the section's automatic rifles as a pretext. It was the clearest abuse of his authority so far.

PETERSCHEN chewed his rage for a long time, then rose from the cot to challenge Forester.

"All right! What would you do in my place?"

"Get a transfer—"

"Quit cold? Leave him a clear field?"

"If she loves you she'll follow you."

"I suggested that, but she won't," Peterschen gestured widely. "She's not the kind that runs away from home. She's a good girl—not a dancer in a dump. And she's a little afraid, because her people have been after her to drop me, told her a lot of stories. They like Doberon because he's French, a gentleman, an officer, because he has some dough of his own. Me? I'm just a roughneck sergeant of Legion, without money and without future."

Forester hesitated, then decided to cut deeply. Peterschen might as well face facts.

"They're right! We're transient soldiers, offer no security—we're the kind of men that are the terror of good mamas everywhere. Even when we do get married, we're called away to die somewhere. We're a rotten risk for a good woman. Doberon is playing dirty with you because he is in love and sort of crazy about it. But as men go he is very decent. And his job is secure. You may lose yours overnight: You've been demoted for drunkenness a couple of times."

"I had no reason to keep sober then!" Peterschen exploded. "Drink? Her people shouldn't object to drink. They've made their money sousing Legionnaires, peddling booze."

"Just the same," Forester insisted, "they worked hard to make a lady out of her, even sacrificing the boy—she does nothing and he tends bar! They think that in the long run she'd be happier with Doberon than with you. Maybe you'll tell me they're wrong?"

"Quitting me, too, eh?" Peterschen grumbled.

"Don't be a fool," Forester smiled grimly. "What I said of you goes for me too. Neither of us would be here if he was a family man. Sure, it hurts when you find out you can't live your own way and change when you want to. I've been through it myself."

Peterschen's face set. He buckled on the garrison belt bearing the holster: "I'm going to have it out with him right now. I go out tonight, or—"

Forester stood before the door. He had grown pale, because his comrade loomed very large and menacing at that moment. The slightest incident could pull the trigger and start Peterschen on a mad scrape. The American said softly, almost in a whisper, "A glass of rum? A cigarette?"

It was not a joke. There was every chance that if Peterschen argued with the lieutenant he would lose his head and shoot him down, for he had murder in his heart. Then he would have small chance before a court-martial.

"A glass of rum? A cigarette?"

Peterschen had seen that scene himself, could picture the quivering man at dawn, the offer of spirits and tobacco—he could picture the squad of white-faced soldiers, waiting with grounded rifles, the nervous non-com in charge of them.

He sank on the cot once more, and seemed about to break into tears.

"Nick, what am I going to do?"

"Sit tight."

"I can't bear it much longer. She's expecting me."

"She might as well learn now that an

army man belongs to his job first." Then Forester saw his comrade so hurt, so broken in spirits that he relented. It took some courage to interfere, for he knew well that the meddler received all the blame. "Listen, promise you'll stay here and do nothing until I come back. I'll talk to Doberon and try to have him let you go. If he won't, I'll go around and explain things to your girl. Promise?"

"Legionnaire's word," Peterschen said, earnestly.

FORESTER closed the door, walked through the hallway into the yard, crossed the esplanade drenched by the slanting rays of the late afternoon sun. He entered the company's office and found Doberon there.

"Hello, Forester!" It was hard to dislike Doberon, with his quick smile and manly bearing. "Want to speak to me? Right with you, old man!" He took the sergeant aside, beyond the possibility of being overheard by the curious clerks: "What is it?"

"I want to explain about Senior-Sergeant Peterschen, Lieutenant." Forester launched into confused technical details about the defective rifle: "Asked me to report to the captain, and it slipped my mind. It was my fault, really."

Doberon laughed.

"That's a fine story, Forester! But it's in a good cause, eh? A pal's a pal. Listen, I know what you're thinking: that I am a bit of a dog with your friend. You're right. Yet, suppose you loved a girl, would you want her depending on Peterschen for happiness and security? Wouldn't you stretch a point, or two points, knowing that he is a restless chap who'd be sick and tired of domestic life inside of three months and wouldn't have any sense of responsibility? You are his pal—remember what he can be to a woman when he's fed up!"

Forester was puzzled. Doberon was right. Older, wiser, tougher women than Josephine had been crucified by the handsome sergeant's indifference and mistreatment when his fancy had passed and his interest was elsewhere.

"But it isn't fair, Lieutenant. He's taking it very hard—"

"It's his character to be very intense for a short time," Doberon retorted.

"I must tell you, Lieutenant, it's serious."

"I'll handle him if needed." Doberon smiled recklessly. He was an officer, a steadier character than Peterschen, but he was a true Legionnaire in his passion for danger. "Don't worry about me."

"He is punished," Lieutenant Doberon said. "Minor lapse in his duties."

There was no use insisting. Forester saluted and walked away. He reached *Le Mazagran* at sunset. The civilian crowd already occupied the tables on the big terrace. The sergeant had an anisette at the bar and casually asked the ready young man waiting on him where he might locate his sister.

"Did Peterschen send you?" the fellow challenged.

"Many thanks," Forester said. He had fulfilled the dictates of courtesy by asking, and walked straight into the spacious living room behind the bar. Had Madame Metayer's eyes been pistols, he would have dropped dead as he entered. She knew him to be the closest friend of the dismissed suitor. Fortunately, Josephine was there, a vision in white and red.

"You have news from Karl?" she asked.

"Yes, Miss. He'll be on duty tonight and sends his regrets—"

"On duty, on duty!" Madame Metayer jeered: "He's punished again, that's what he is! He's no good for anything except drinking and fighting. I know his kind—"

"You should, Madame," Forester assured her simply: "You've been serving drinks to Legionnaires for twenty-five years!"

Josephine picked up her hat and took his arm, led him through a back door into the street: "Monsieur Forester, may I speak to you freely?"

"Yes."

"Let's walk." Josephine started off briskly. She spoke with amazing self-confidence: "Let there be no misunderstanding. I am not sure I love Karl. But I do think he is a fine man, and that his main trouble has been that no one saw through his bad habits. He's been a very lonely man. I did tell him that I'd consider marrying him if he stopped drinking. I made no promise. Nevertheless, I think it would be cowardly of me to break with him just now. Has he kept his promise? Fine. Now, I wish to know whether he is detained on regular duty or punished."

"Punished, Miss. Oh, nothing much—two days' confinement."

"That's five times this month. Previously," Josephine said angrily, "he was never punished. Did Lieutenant Doberon inflict the punishment?"

There was no evading this very direct question.

"Yes, Miss."

"Was it justifiable from a military point of view, or was I mixed up in it? You understand what I mean, Monsieur Forester, so don't play with words."

"Well," Forester reddened, embarrassed, "that's hard to tell! In the service, a superior can always find something wrong if he looks for it. But no one save himself really knows why he acted."

Josephine halted, turned her large, dark eyes on him full strength. She was very beautiful, very alive, pulsing with indignation.

"For instance, would the captain have punished Karl for the same thing?"

"Maybe—" Forester felt disloyal to his friend and corrected himself. "No, I don't believe so."

"That's all I wished to know! Thank you so much, Monsieur Forester!"

Her small, firm hand gripped the sergeant's briefly; she turned and strode away. There was a menacing decision in her walk. Forester strolled back to the barracks.

PETERSCHEN rose as he entered the room.

"You've been gone an hour! Well?"

"Nothing doing with the lieutenant. But you're solid with the girl. This last trick of the lieutenant's may backfire!" Forester laughed. "As long as you ask my advice, let her take charge! She doesn't have to snap to attention when he gives orders. She's so mad at him that she'll bawl him out."

"That'll make matters worse," Peterschen muttered.

"Not much! She'll fix it so he can't abuse you much longer—she's smart, that kid!" Forester stripped off his tunic, placed it on the cot: "I have nothing to do. So I'll have my meal sent in with yours, and we can play cards."

Peterschen rested a massive hand on his shoulder.

"You're a good friend, Nick," he said slowly.

Bugle calls tolled off the passing hours. There was a confused rumor, when the nine o'clock leave men returned. One or two rows occurred some time later, as

patrols brought in belated Legionnaires not as sober as they might have been. Then the night grew still, so still that the blare of a remote radio in town came into the room with soft, thin persistence.

"Ten for the ace, four for the king, and five points for the last trick; nineteen and fifty-four—" Forester swept up the cards, grinned. "That's another five francs you owe me."

"You're a professional," Peterschen protested. "Ten francs on the next one, but I'll cut twice!"

Forester shuffled, gave out the cards three at a time. He had won all evening. The game continued. They heard other sergeants coming in, entering the common room. There was much talking, some laughter. Then the door of the room opened, but neither player looked up.

"Nothing to drink here," Forester announced, taking up a trick. He thought that a comrade had come in. "You ought to know Karl's gone dry!"

Then he saw Peterschen glance upward, his expression change as he rose hastily and came to attention. Forester imitated him, spun on his heels and froze, hands on the seams of the trousers, shoulders squared, chin high: Lieutenant Doberon was standing nearby.

Forester had seen him under fire several times, once during a bitter hand-to-hand struggle against Anti-Atlas tribesmen. His clothing had been lacerated by the blades of knives. Yet he had never seen him so tense, so pale. The flesh was like putty applied over the bones, the steely eyes blazed fiercely. Forester could see his jaw quivering.

"Forester!"

"Mon lieutenant!"

"You've done what you started to do. Now get out of this room."

"Will the Lieutenant explain, please?"

"Your gossip has made trouble. Go."

Forester bristled at the tone.

"I didn't start out to do anything save avoid trouble." His own voice sounded harsh and strained in his ears, but he felt that he could not leave the two together. There would be a fight, a scandal. "If you maintain your order to leave, Lieutenant, I shall report at once to the captain."

Doberon gestured in annoyance.

"Sorry, Forester. Didn't mean to reproach you." He fought visibly for self-control. "You had a right to tell the truth." He resumed: "Peterschen, you believe you have a grievance against me, that I have not treated you like a man?"

For a second, Peterschen seemed awed. Respect for gold braid, instilled into him by seven long years of Legion training, was hard to shake off. Then the dancing little flecks of fury kindled in his pupils as he looked at his chief.

"You've acted like a pig, Lieutenant."

"Do you believe I am afraid of you, Peterschen?"

"Yes. If you were not, you'd have given me a fair chance. You wouldn't have hidden behind your official rank. This is a matter of outside duty, to be played out man against man."

Doberon nodded.

"I've realized that, Peterschen. I apologize for being unjust. Are you satisfied?"

"Yes, Lieutenant."

"Consider your present punishment lifted. If you wish it, I shall inform the captain that your other punishments were not properly motivated."

"That won't be necessary, Lieutenant."

Forester heaved a grunt of relief. Peterschen could not explain; the officer had done things handsomely. But Doberon took three steps across the room.

"Now, I'm going to bash your face in, you overgrown, clumsy lout—" the lieutenant tossed his kepi on the cot, stepped forward. Peterschen grinned and lifted his hands; he had dreamed of this moment for many weeks!

FORESTER stepped between the two.

"You can't fight here—that's inviting the whole battalion and the entire town. That means scandal." He thought of the only argument that would penetrate their excited brains. "You don't want Mademoiselle Metayer's name dragged into this, do you?"

"Correct!" Peterschen admitted at once, dropping his fists and retreating to the wall. The lieutenant hesitated, halted. Forester saw that he was almost sobbing with nervous rage.

"Forester, this must be settled at once, tonight!"

"As you wish, Lieutenant. But, believe me, better get hold of a friend of your own rank as a witness. I'll bring another man along, and we'll be covered."

"I'll leave you the choice of weapons," Doberon added.

"These will do—" Peterschen laughed, holding up his fists. "I don't need a fancy duel!"

When Lieutenant Doberon had left, the big man laughed at Forester. "Talk about luck! I've wanted to get my hands on him for a couple of months! I won't hurt him —much!"

Forester looked at him coldly.

"You won't handle him as you do some raw recruit with twice his weight. If the fight had started a moment ago, he might have licked you. He's crazy with rage. I hear he was pretty good in the combat boxing class at Joinville."

Peterschen patted him on the back.

"He may be a good little guy, Nick. But I am a very good big guy. So don't fret."

A few minutes later, there was a knock at the door and a sub-lieutenant of the Camel Corps, in white uniform, wearing Saharan sandals, entered the room. The two sergeants saluted, but the young man motioned impatiently for them to drop formality.

"My name's Canivet," he introduced himself. "Sergeant Forester? Can we talk privately?" He lowered his voice when they reached the yard: "I don't suppose we can stop this foolishness. Doberon seems determined to go through with it. It seems that a young lady accused him of taking a cowardly advantage of a man he was afraid to meet openly! In his mental condition, I presume we would react in the same way.

"Doberon has agreed to fight with fists only, and we'd better decide on that. I am aware that it places your man at a disadvantage—he's said to be an expert bruiser, but he has fifty pounds in weight. Moreover, there would be considerable danger of a fatal beating if feet were used, and a death could not very well be hushed up. As it is, we may have some trouble. Better bring an extra witness, Lieutenant Uzanne, a very sporting young chap who'll be of assistance, perhaps, and can be counted on, in any case, to keep it quiet."

"Agreed," Forester said. "When and where?"

"In an hour," Canivet said, after glancing at his watch. "You know where the police building is? Well, you remember an alley opening near the bus station? You pass through the alley, turn to the right. There's a fine place there, used as a parking place for the cars. It's private, well-lighted and—" the sub-lieutenant smiled—"only two hundred yards from the hospital!"

"We'll be there," Forester promised. "Say, Lieutenant, do you think Doberon has a chance?"

"Surely. Why?" Canivet smiled. "A bet?"

"Five hundred francs, Lieutenant?"

"Let's put it this way: Half a month's pay of mine against half a month's pay of yours. That's fairer."

"You should get odds, Lieutenant."

"Nonsense. You don't know Doberon. See you later."

CHAPTER II

TRIAL BY FISTS

FORESTER picked up Sergeant Sierck, who belonged in another company, a stolid, honest chap, whom he swore to secrecy. The three walked through the town, now completely still.

They found the three officers already waiting at the meeting place. Canivet explained briefly that he had bribed the native watchman to switch on the big light overhead and to take a long walk.

There was plenty of room, as the parked trucks, covered with canvas, left an oblong thirty by fifty feet between their hubs and the blank wall on the opposite side. The footing was flat, firm, hard-packed sand. Doberon was stripping already. Canivet beckoned to Forester.

"Doberon proposes that the loser agrees to keep away from *Le Mazagran* until the winner gives him permission to call. Ask your chap if that goes with him."

Peterschen listened, smiled.

"I get it. The loser is to keep away from Josephine, completely. No writing, no explanations, no interviews. That's better than I asked for. Agreed."

Military Surgeon Uzanne, a dapper,

youngish little chap with glasses, came up to watch Peterschen strip. He spoke fluent German, and conversed in a friendly tone.

"You're a Pomeranian?"

"No. Herr Dokter. I'm from the Rhineland."

"They don't breed runts out your way, eh, my lad?"

"I had a brother in the Guards, two inches taller," Peterschen boasted. "Killed as an ensign on the Somme, in 'Fifteen. But my uncle—there was a big man for you." Peterschen flexed his arms, twisted his big torso from the waist to limber up. He was no longer baffled: this was familiar business. He was irked a bit by the preliminary ceremonies, that was all.

"Ready—" Canivet called for his man.

"Karl, no kicking, eh? Ready," Forester echoed.

Peterschen stepped forward with a chuckle of pleasure.

When the two faced each other, it could be seen that Doberon's head did not rise much higher than Peterschen's chin. He appeared small by contrast, although he was not a small man. But the nude, tanned torso was overlaid with muscles, and his movements showed self-confidence, a poised, dynamic energy.

The big sergeant was not a fool, and estimated his opponent at his worth. He did not rush in to invite a well-placed blow, but held his arms to cover his stomach and chest, his fist bunched before his chin. In physique and actions, he reminded Forester of pictures of old time prize-fighters.

He knew that the brain guiding that huge body was not dull, that Peterschen could be crafty and patient. Doberon appeared somewhat puzzled when the larger man did not instantly seek to crush him. A swift flash of worry crossed his serious, set face.

Five seconds passed, five more. The boots made no sound on the sand. Doberon was maneuvering. His tactics were not exactly those of a boxer, revealing something of fencing, and in a remote fashion, of the cautious approach of a toreador. Sierck grumbled under his breath: "Too much fooling around. What's the matter with Karl?"

Doberon attacked.

He did not try for the face, but swung for Peterschen's body, at the waist line. The blow resounded like a stick brought down against a tight cloth. As the big man's arms lashed out, Doberon dodged under the flying fists, came up on Peterschen's right side and smashed both hands to the stomach. Then he sprang backward out of reach.

The lieutenant knew where to aim, and could hit hard. Peterschen's mouth opened. His sides were reddened.

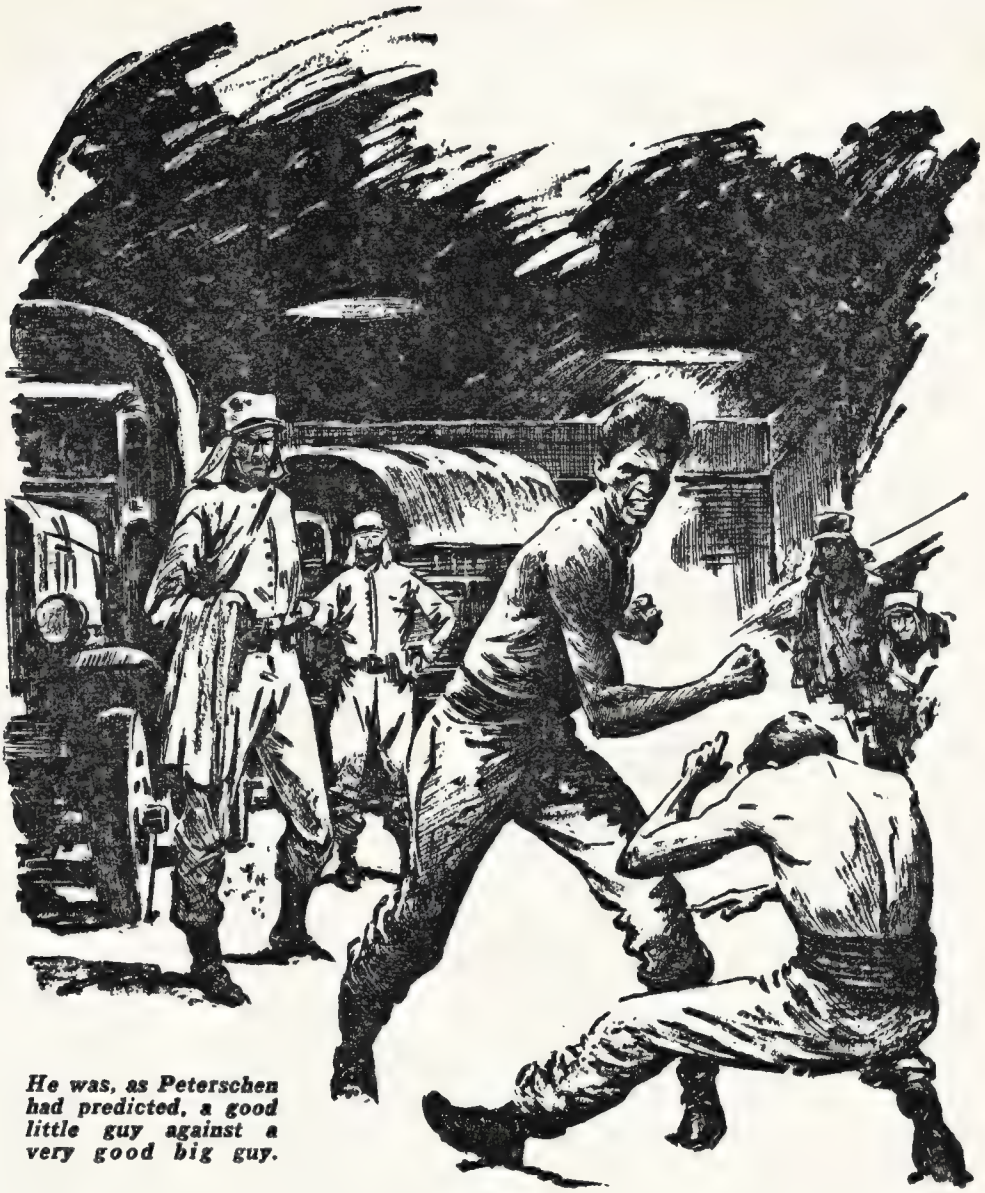
Forester understood the officer's plan. Doberon probably felt that he must seek victory slowly, to make use of his invisible physical advantages: cleaner living, abstinence from drink. Forester watched his face, saw that the eyes were again blazing. With the first contact, his anger, his hatred, had flamed again.

In a smaller place, Peterschen would have been better off. He could not corner his man to take advantage of his weight or his superior strength. And he was afraid to punch out at the elusive target before him, remembering that the lieutenant had been trained to take advantage of such openings. His self-control was praiseworthy, for he was by taste a headlong, bruising fighter.

He crept forward with short steps, his arms close to his body, trying to back Doberon against the wall, against the trucks. If he could hold him still for ten seconds, all would be over. All knew it, Doberon even better than the others. His leaps were swift and sure; he performed like an acrobat. And, time after time, his knuckles sank into the softening flesh above the big chap's trousers.

Peterschen tried to defend himself by shooting his arms out straight, then, as the calm dwindled, he hooked, swung. Doberon dodged, and clubbed him over the kidneys.

TEN, fifteen steps toward the wall, and Doberon would dart aside, bobbing into the open. Ten, fifteen steps, toward the trucks and he would repeat the same amazingly agile, quick escape. There was no chance that his legs would tire. He owned the crossed-swords of the expert fencer, his limbs were sheaves of smooth, tireless muscles. And his eyes, accustomed to guiding a thin point of steel



He was, as Peterschen had predicted, a good little guy against a very good big guy.

through the least opening left by the guarding blade, enabled him to slide swift blows between Peterschen's arms.

"He's cutting Karl in half," Forester growled. He did not like to see a friend licked, and he regretted losing half a month's pay.

Peterschen, hurt by the blows, felt ridiculous, was losing patience. Doberon coaxed him to swing, evading the sweeping fist by shifting his body from the waist. Those watching could see that he was repeating this with a purpose in mind. His apparent hesitation, which started the sergeant's desperate effort to knock the head from his shoulders, was too well timed, too precise to be accidental.

Forester wanted to warn his man. But the others watched in silence, and he felt obligated to do the same.

It came suddenly. Peterschen had missed, and the officer threw his fist, as one flings a baseball. Eye, arm, hand, all worked together. Struck on the side of

the jaw, Peterschen sank on all fours, waddled aimlessly, slid forward on his face. For an instant, Forester believed it was finished.

It might have been, had the fight been conducted according to ordinary boxing rules, when ten seconds spell the end. But it was to continue until one was completely unconscious or admitted defeat. Peterschen floundered on the sand for what seemed endless minutes, hoisted himself to his haunches.

Doberon struck him again, as he had a right to do; Peterschen was rising. This time, the big fellow went down buttocks first, his head snapped back and he sprawled face upward.

Despite his chagrin, Forester smiled. The rule made to protect Doberon was working against him. A kick at this time would have ended the combat. But then no one had expected Peterschen to go down first.

The sergeant rolled over, strong instinct asserting itself—always, when he had been on the floor, he had been kicked, and now what remained of his consciousness urged him to move away. This worked to his advantage, for when he scrambled to his feet, weak and reeling. Doberon was several yards away, unable to follow the squirming progress of his fallen adversary.

"Now!"

Forester heard the call, but never knew who had uttered it. Perhaps Canivet, perhaps Doberon. In any case, the lieutenant rushed forward, right hand cocked, his whole body swinging with the punch.

Peterschen saw him coming, lost his head and brought down his fist as if striking with a mallet. The officer checked himself, bobbed his head back. But he had miscalculated in his excitement, and the mass of flesh and bone scraped his forehead, caught him on the bridge of the nose, rasped over his mouth and chin. The sergeant's whole strength had been behind the blow.

It was luck, sheer luck, that it had landed.

DOBERON staggered back and another punch dropped on the side of his neck. In the light, a faint, pinkish mist surrounded his head for a flittering second, like a halo. And when he saw his face, Forester took hope. Doberon was bleeding from the nostrils and lips; his eyebrow was cut.

What was even better, Peterschen had come out of his diffident mood. He had been humiliated, hurt, and he had forgotten he was fighting an officer.

He was no longer seeking to guard himself, to match his skill against that of a better trained man. He had forgotten his swollen, bruised belly, and was flinging about in great, slashing swings. These blows were more like slaps than punches with snap to them, but the sheer weight of his hands drove Doberon about the open space, dazed him.

He made the fatal mistake of seeking to clinch with the sergeant. Peterschen merely seemed to shrug him off, yet literally lifted him off his feet and slapped him to the wall. The big man was talking now, as was his habit, muttering curses, spitting out insults. He was neither graceful nor gentlemanly, but he was formidable, efficient.

"How do you like this?" he panted. "And this? And this?"

Whether the blow missed or struck, he gloated in the physical joy of the struggle. Doberon slithered to the ground, arched his body to gain his feet.

The doctor ran forward, saying something about injuries, serious consequences. Forester forgot military discipline, clasped him in his arms. "Keep out of it. He hasn't quit yet."

Sierck, thinking that the fight was spreading to the witnesses, edged in toward Canivet. But the sub-lieutenant waved him aside and grasped the doctor.

"He'd be sore if you stopped it, Doc. There's a woman in it."

"Oh—" the young surgeon stepped back. "In that case, it's an alienist he needs."

Doberon courageously tried to keep fighting, but his strength was gone. He was, as Peterschen had predicted, a good little guy against a very good big guy.

The sergeant, trained in a hard school, was not squeamish about striking him. His accumulated, concentrated resentment of weeks found an escape in vicious blows.

Doberon had changed from a young athlete into a bloody silhouette as loosely connected as a rag doll. He was out on his

feet, ceased even his futile pawing of instinctive defense. Then he collapsed, kneeling with his head against the hub of a truck, his hands feebly clutching the spokes.

"Enough?" Peterschen asked.

Doberon peered about with swollen puffs where his eyes lurked, hoisted himself upright in a foolish parade of nerve. Peterschen started to laugh, and slapped him down with a careless sweep of his hand. The officer crept on the sand, groping for the wheel. He grasped the spokes. His shoulders rose slowly, slowly. But he lacked the strength to haul his weight up again, and he was still, as if he had fallen asleep suddenly.

"Guess I win," Peterschen announced. "You brought towels, Nick?" He wiped himself dry, balled the towel and tossed it aside. Reaching for his undershirt, he commented, "He's a lot tougher than you'd think." Buckling the belt over his tunic, a moment later, he loomed down at Doberon. His good nature had returned, and he appeared sick of the whole business. "Hope I didn't hurt him too much, Doc."

"Broke his nose," the medical man explained. "Lacerations of the face, serious contusions of the body. But not permanently injured, unless he's suffered a concussion." He looked up: "Beg pardon—do you need attention?"

Peterschen threw back his head and laughed.

"Me? A bottle of liniment and a good sleep. And, if you'll order it, a good stiff swig of brandy."

FORESTER was startled when an acquaintance pressed him for details of the fight the next morning. He was as sure of the others' discretion as of his own. But everyone he met appeared to know the various phases of the meeting—for instance, that Peterschen had been knocked down a couple of times.

He was puzzled at first. Then he discovered that neither he nor his companions had realized that the blank wall rose to a terrace which employees of the garage and bus company used as an out-of-doors dormitory! They had been awakened by the disturbance. Further, the orderlies at the hospital had related that Doberon had been brought in cut and bruised, his face swollen like a pumpkin, with some silly story that he had been riding in the moonlight and had been thrown by his horse.

The incident created a sensation. Everywhere in town, in the barracks, at the hotel, in the cafes, people discussed nothing else.

The military commander at Dar-Oukil, the battalion chief, the captain, were reluctant to acknowledge the matter officially. That would have forced them to an investigation, an officers' council, endless washing of dirty linen in public. But their displeasure was made manifest by a series of events.

Sub-Lieutenant Canivet was ordered to go forth and command the camel-pasture guards; Doctor Uzanne was dispatched to vaccinate tribesmen. In the Legion, the entire company to which Doberon was attached was forbidden town liberty for three days—this to keep individual members from getting into other fights when discussing the matter with civilians and non-Legionnaires. Sergeant Forester and Sierck received eight days' confinement to quarters for "bad spirit and inattention to duty."

As for Peterschen, the triumphant warrior, he was ordered to pack up and leave immediately for the Macheb blockhouse, the worst, most desolate outpost of the region, a cube of masonry simmering on a waterless ridge. A garrison of sixteen Legionnaires was kept there. And when men returned after a few months in that enchanting sojourn, they cursed whenever the dump was mentioned.

Forester did not blame his superiors for seeking to hush up the scandal by scattering the principal actors for a while. It is not good for general discipline to have a sergeant prove himself better than an officer, even physically. It was rumored that Doberon had followed custom and applied for transfer to another regiment.

Because he was nominally undergoing punishment, Forester spent his leisure hours in the sergeants' rooms. But colleagues in other companies, who were allowed in town, eagerly gleaned fresh information, brought him the latest gossip from the cafes.

To start with, Peterschen had disre-

garded his orders to start at once in an effort to see Josephine. But he had been refused admittance to the house by the father, uncle, and brother. He had stormed and cursed, called all three vile names, but in the end had been dragged away by the non-com in charge of the supply convoy with which he was to travel to his new post.

Some time later, Madame Metayer and her beautiful daughter, carrying parcels, had called at the hospital and asked to see Doberon. The lieutenant had sent out word that he would not speak to them, and had returned the gifts they had left, bottles of fine wine from the private cellar. Josephine had called again, alone, without better success.

Forester was one of the few who understood why: Doberon had given his word not to see or communicate with Josephine in case he lost. He was inclined to inform the girl and spare her humiliation, but he was cured of mixing into other people's business for a while.

Several days passed, and he received a letter from Peterschen. It was written in pencil, and the senior-sergeant's spelling of French words was abominable.

Dear and True Friend and Comrade:

You should see this dump. Nothing but the walls and the rocks. Everyone here is crazy. The corporal has fits. He claims epilepsy. I don't believe him. He is faking to get away. I don't blame him. But it makes things harder. The men just laugh when he gives an order. They ask him if he is having another fit. So little happens that two days after I came, the bunch here got excited because somebody found a green pebble in the sand. I am very lonely at night. There is no place to go. The jackals yell. There is no booze to be had for love or money. And the wine has turned sour. You can hardly drink it.

I am writing you to ask a favor. I wrote Josephine the day I left. Got an answer, three lines on a double sheet of paper. Says that after what I called her folks I should consider our engagement finished. She does not even say she is sorry. Her father added more: He says I proved myself a bum, as he thought I was all the time. But he hopes that I am enough of a gentleman not to embarrass them further. I don't see why he can't understand that I pushed him in the mug only because I was excited, that I meant nothing by it.

Josephine always said you were a gentleman and probably came from a good family, no matter what you had done to become a Legionnaire. She will listen to you. You know what to say.

I am going crazy here, what with the sun, and the corporal and a couple of other cranks. So don't fail me. I am your devoted Friend and Comrade, Karl Peterschen, Senior-Sergeant in the Foreign Legion, at the Outpost of Macheb, Sahara.

Forester did his best, as he was asked. But the Metayers grew menacing when he asked to see Josephine: "We'll complain to your captain if you come around here. There's been enough bad talk."

He waited for the girl in the street, but she cut him dead before a dozen people.

Forester had served in lonely blockhouses, and pitied Peterschen. The sun, the loneliness, the poor food, the bad water, the company of discontented men deprived of any pleasure, were hard to bear even normally. It must be torture for a man suffering from love and jealousy. It would be like Peterschen to risk court-martial in returning to Dar-Oukil without authorization. But Forester could do no more.

DOBERON was back on duty in a few days. Some of his cuts were still taped. Fortunately, the slight alteration of his features had worked to his advantage. He somehow appeared more rugged, tougher. His transfer was pending and he applied for leave.

The orderlies spread reports of his interview with the captain. The older man pointed out that transfer at that time meant the loss of promotion. But it was awkward for Doberon to remain in town: Josephine was making desperate efforts to see him, forgetting all proper reserve.

Sergeant Sierck, who had to turn her away at the barracks gate on one occasion, told Forester: "She looks so sad and beautiful—you know, I think she is madly in love with the Lieutenant now. How do you explain that? She was sore at him because he was riding her boy-friend, she bawled him out and made him pick a fight. He gets licked, and you'd expect to see her fall into the arms of her strong sweetheart. But what happens? She picks the loser!"

Forester understood. By a rather usual twist of feminine psychology, Josephine had come to feel responsible for Doberon's misfortune. It was her words that had driven him to challenge a man much larg-

er, much stronger than himself. He had fought gallantly, had suffered a terrific beating, to redeem himself in her eyes. He was her knight, doubly to be cherished because he was hurt and humiliated.

How long could Doberon hold out? How long before he broke his word and saw Josephine?

The American thought of arranging matters. He could write to Peterschen, outline the situation, begging him to release Doberon from a promise which no longer had a purpose. That would be the sporting course to take. But there was a chance that the big sergeant finding out that the cause was lost, would get to brooding and end by firing a bullet into his palate, Legion style. When Peterschen loved, he was not wholly sane.

Forester learned that Doberon was seeking to hasten his transfer. The strain of being within a short distance of the girl without the right to speak to her was increasing, that was evident. Forester had an impression that trouble was only beginning, that what had preceded would seem a mere prelude.

Unexpectedly, there was an inspection of the battalion, much more thorough than usual. The men grew nervous and tense, for it was plain that something important was pending. Officers streamed to the major's office constantly. Then a typewritten notice was posted on the bulletin board outside the administrative building.

Due to unusual activities of numerous bands of raiders in the region, particularly to the southwest, the troops must be ready to move at short notice; consequently, all applications for transfers, for leaves, were cancelled.

The general commanding the troops in the Saharan Territories had asked the Battalion of Legion to supply two detachments for special duty. Volunteers were to give their names to their section commanders. Only men with good conduct records could be considered—which meant that there would be fighting!

It meant also that Doberon could not depart. Regardless of his personal problems, a young officer could not decently insist upon leaving when fighting was in prospect. Furthermore, he was due for a turn of field duty, according to routine schedule.

Forester volunteered. He was turned down. So he asked to see the captain, who reminded him that he was on the punished list. He pointed out that save for eight days' confinement for a very trifling motive, his record had been clean for months. Sergeants with much more serious charges against them, for drunkenness and indiscipline, were accepted. He added with a stubborn expression, that he would feel dishonored if he were not taken.

"I understand all that," the captain conceded. "But Lieutenant Doberon's platoon is the only one with a vacancy. Would you like to serve under him in the field?"

"I'd be proud to."

"And what would he think of it, eh?"

"Lieutenant Doberon would not deny me a chance to see action, Captain. Ask him."

"Good idea," the captain granted. "Orderly, ask Lieutenant Doberon to come here." When the young officer arrived, his chief indicated Forester, standing at attention six feet away: "The sergeant has volunteered to serve in your platoon. For one reason or another, which I need not make clearer, I thought it best to consult you in his presence."

Doberon looked at Forester, with an odd expression. The sergeant noticed the obvious restlessness of the young officer, and waited, shaking with anxiety. No man likes to have a constant reminder of defeat nearby. But the lieutenant was not an ordinary man.

"Had I been granted the privilege of selecting my subordinates instead of waiting for volunteers," he said slowly, "I would have asked for Sergeant Forester. I hold him in high esteem."

CHAPTER III

DESTINY TRAIL

ON THE blazing afternoon a fortnight later when Senior-Sergeant Peterschen, with ten men from the Macheb blockhouse joined Lieutenant Doberon's platoon in the open desert, it seemed to Forester that he had known from the beginning that this meeting would take place. The destinies of these two men were con-

nected by some bizarre link, a strange force other than human will or mere chance was bringing them face to face.

Life for those two weeks had not been a sinecure for the detachment led by young Doberon. The platoon had marched and countermarched, covering thirty kilometers at maximum speed to reach a spot in the void of the dunes, only to turn back to the starting point at the same rapid gait. Occasionally a scouting plane from Bou-Denil or Dechar flew overhead, dropped messages, and twice a day the signalmen would communicate with regional headquarters by radio.

Doberon was borne up by some understanding of what he was doing. His men were not. They forgot that they had volunteered knowing what to expect, and cursed their lot, cursed the Legion. Their boots were wearing out, their garments shredding; sunburn peeled and surface skin from their noses, chins and hands. Not a few suffered from dysentery, contracted by drinking water bailed out of the soft mire at the bottom of drying wells.

Human beings proved more enduring than animals. A third of the pack mules had died, and part of their loads had been distributed among the men.

It is unlikely, nevertheless, that any one of the eighty-seven privates and non-commissioned officers would have quit if given the opportunity. For the scent of danger was strong in the air, and all were braced by the hope that, of all the detachments seeking the Ait-Senushen raiders, theirs would be the lucky one.

Their faith was rewarded. Definite information came that the phantom band was but a day's march westward. From various indications, Doberon had estimated their strength at three hundred and fifty men, escorting herds of captured animals, camels, horses and mules.

He knew that they would be armed with modern, rapid fire rifles, for the days of the flintlocks and percussion guns belonged in the past. And he was aware that they would be well led. A man accepted by his tribesmen as a raiding chieftain was experienced, brave and cunning.

Doberon called the non-coms together, unfolded a map. He marked the location of the enemy with a black cross. Then the tip of his pencil traced small circles to represent French detachments, hemming the natives in a desolate, almost waterless zone: To the north, there was a mounted company of Legion, come from across the Moroccan Border, a squadron of cavalry out of Gourrama, a powerful column of infantry and riders of armored cars equipped with machine guns, and the other Legion Platoon from Dar-Oukil. Doberon and his men were due east.

He reported to headquarters, announcing his intention to close in without further delay and attack. If he waited, the raiders might vanish again into the immense desert. He was instructed to proceed to an appointed spot, to pick up reinforcements from the nearby blockhouse of Macheb. This would bring his men up to a full hundred rifles. The lieutenant acknowledged the message without protest.

But some time later, walking beside Forester, he voiced annoyance: "Radio is a great help, but not an unmixed blessing. Ten or twelve men more or less won't make much difference. You know how these scraps are—decided in the first ten minutes."

It was evident that he was not pleased to have Peterschen as a collaborator. Perhaps he was self-conscious before the men when he thought of giving orders to a man who had licked him. Forester had noted that Doberon made a point of treating him as he did the others, but sensed a definite reserve under the surface friendliness.

PETERSCHEN and his Legionnaires were waiting for the platoon at the appointed place. The sergeant was dressed as carefully as in town, wore all his medals. The terrific heat did not seem to have effect on his powerful frame, although his face glistened with sweat as if it had been lacquered. He halted six paces from Doberon, saluted, reported himself and his detachment.

It was a tense instant, for Peterschen's eyes scanned the officer's face for the marks of the fight, and a faint smile showed on his broad face. Doberon omitted to shake hands, and replied in a few banal words.

"Let's get going," he suggested at once. And the march was resumed. Everywhere

could be discerned traces of the raiders' passage. They were suffering considerably from lack of water, and the carcasses of dead animals grew more numerous every mile. Peterschen sought Forester at the first chance.

"Did you see Josephine?"

"From a distance." The American related his efforts. But he was silent concerning the girl's manifest interest in Doberon. "You know, Karl, he kept his word. Never went near the place."

"I didn't even ask you," Peterschen reminded him. "He's a slob in some ways, but he's a man." He nodded as if in answer to a question. "Something's wrong—but as soon as I can get to speak to her, it will be straightened out. Her family's been talking."

"I know it's no use," Forester said. "But here goes anyway. I'd drop it now, if I were you."

"Why?"

Forester could have explained that the matter had been decided by the girl herself. That Josephine was now pursuing Doberon. But he feared an outburst of jealousy; and explained, "You're stuck in an isolated dump now, where no woman could be with you. After you're married you may draw just such assignments again, or be transferred to the Tonkino."

"I can leave the Legion—"

"Then what? Enter business with her old man? You don't get along, and then you'd be your own best customer. Try a civilian job? Small salary—and she'd get to feeling sorry that she had not married somebody who appreciated antique furniture and fancy curtains."

Peterschen scowled at the prospect, but he shook his head stubbornly. "Others manage. We can, too. Hell, I won't be the only married sergeant in the Legion."

At dusk, the detachment halted for a long rest. Doberon gave orders that no fires were to be lighted, no unnecessary noises made. The men ate, stretched out and fell asleep. During his turn of guard, from midnight to two, Forester noticed that the lieutenant had not sought blankets, but prowled restlessly about camp.

"Better get some rest," the American suggested when the officer stopped to exchange a few words. "You'll be worn out by morning."

"Too nervous," Doberon confessed frankly. "I'll be all right." He was silent for a long time, then resumed in a tense voice: "Hard to know what to do at times, eh, Forester? An idea gets a hold of you, fills your brain, and you can't shake it off. Perhaps it would be as well if I were hit tomorrow—this morning."

"Nerves, Lieutenant," Forester assured him. He laughed comfortingly. "You won't be hit."

"I hope you're right. If I went now—" Doberon lowered his voice. "I'd feel rotten if I were, because I have left something undone. If—" but he broke off sharply. "You're right, I'd better try to sleep."

LONG before dawn, the detachment was on the move by moonlight. The shadows lengthened, grotesque and gigantic against the sand that glittered like snow. At five-thirty, Doberon called a last conference. The second in command, Adjutant Collin, Peterschen, Forester and half-dozen other non-coms surrounded the officer, who assigned various tasks, this one to command the mule-guards, another to be in charge of ammunition.

Peterschen and the Legionnaires from Macheb would take the lead; the main body under the lieutenant would follow. In the first surprise, the Berbers would reveal their positions by firing upon the first line, and the detachment would know where to strike. At first Peterschen looked at Doberon with a sort of shamed gratitude, because he was being given a conspicuous role. Then he smiled, as another thought struck him.

"I was afraid I might be detailed to guard the mules," he said. "Instead I'll take the van. Thanks, Lieutenant."

Doberon eyed him coldly. "Do you wish to be replaced?"

"Oh, no, Lieutenant." Peterschen's grin became perceptibly scornful. "I like excitement."

Gray light seeped through the dark night, floated over the ground uncertainly. Dawn. A light green flush was showing in the sky, along the horizon line.

"Come on, forward—"

Peterschen and his men gained ground,

spreading widely, ghostly silhouettes in the semi-darkness. For long minutes, nothing was heard save the beating of boots on the uneven ground, the light, sharp clicking of loose equipment. Forester's movements had become mechanical, like those of a man marching toward the scaffold. Attack at dawn, attack at dawn!

Then fire flashed out ahead, swept for some distance like a flame before the wind, in a sharp, crackling fusillade. The first missiles hummed near, there were impacts on the sand. While the lieutenant halted his men, Peterschen's form leaped onward, and his resounding voice called out.

"Come on, Legion!"

He and his men lured fire, and it was determined that the raiders' line formed a crescent opening toward the attackers, center closing the entrance into a wide flanks and braced on low sand crests. When he had covered an additional hundred yards, Peterschen signaled to his men to drop to cover.

"Open fire!" Doberon called.

He knelt behind the prone line of skirmishers, and participated in the firing with a carbine. Forester was surprised, because he had expected the order to rush at once, before the sun rose much higher. It would be stupid for the Legionnaires to remain in one place and exchange shots at long range, when the known purpose of the natives would be to give time to the prize animals and booty to be taken away.

Forester had hoped that the engagement would be over before the heat grew intense. Carrying rifle, bayonet, pack and two hundred and fifty rounds of ammunition was hard enough on the march, but became torment when a man was forced into cramped positions.

Peterschen, perhaps two hundred meters ahead, seemed to have a better understanding of the actual need. He had brought but one automatic rifle from Macheb, but the gunner was an expert. And he was firing not at the first line of the raiders but, at extreme range, into the confused huddle of men and animals in the distance.

The big German was standing to direct fire, and even at that distance, Forester saw the sand spurting about his feet. Peterschen was conspicuous, in his light uniform, with the broad chevrons gleaming on his cuffs.

"Reckless fool, show-off," Forester grumbled, grinning. He was not concerned about his friend, had as much faith in his comrade's luck as Peterschen had himself. "He had the right idea, too. If those at the rear start to crack, those near us will beat it all the faster. And once we get them moving, we'll—"

It would have been time for a vigorous demonstration with the bayonet. But the lieutenant assigned targets for the automatics, as if he intended to remain at this spot a while, and he used his carbine at intervals, firing two or three shots in quick succession.

The men were growing impatient. The enemy's fire was taking effect; there were several wounded already. And the Legion would achieve nothing if it did not move.

Peterschen turned, looked back to see why he was not supported. All saw him make a derisive gesture, then deliberately stretch out on the ground, taking cover. And all understood his meaning: He believed he was being exposed purposely!

Doberon appeared to have lost his head, to be in a daze. He was brave, exposed himself recklessly, but mere courage does not win a combat in the dunes. Forester saw Adjutant Collin trot toward the officer. Collin was an inconspicuous, taciturn fellow everywhere except under fire. He grasped the lieutenant by the arm, shouted in his ear. Then Doberon started sharply, and started to shout:

"Bayonet! Fix bayonets! Rise at the signal, oblique left to clear your comrades!" When the blades were adjusted, he lifted the whistle to his lips and the Legionnaires leaped forward.

The glitter of the long blade had its usual effect. The natives did not wait for the Legionnaires to arrive.

But after a first panic, they heeded the calls of their tribal chieftains, whose shrill vociferations shamed them into further resistance. "Sons of Nothing! Cowards, will you let the Christians rob you of your booty? Allah, Allah—"

They made no attempt to reform a continuous line, but having taken shelter against the sand, behind rocks, opened fire at short range. This scattered fusillade

was not as impressive as the volleys that had preceded it, but it proved more murderous.

"Collin, hold those slobs," Doberon called. "The rest follow me—"

He had recovered his senses and saw that the natives were seeking to lure his soldiers into a series of minor skirmishes while the animals and loot were taken away. He had been identified as the leader and was the target for many rifles. Bullets whispered near him. The Legionnaire on his right dropped with a smashed thigh, one behind him was killed outright.

Then he was at the first objective: piles of merchandise, bundles of printcloth, bags of sugar and salt, of flour and rice, boxes of tea. The natives who had been loading the stuff on the camels made a desperate stand.

THE lieutenant was swept down by a swarm of furious men, and Forester obliqued with his group to clear him. He jabbed at random, reversed and used the butt. Then a swinging club crashed against his cheekbone, his skull seemed to explode. When his head cleared somewhat, he was amazed to find himself still on his feet, still fighting, with the taste of blood in his throat. He was aware of what occurred only in a dim, uncertain fashion.

He ran here and there, shouted orders. Occasionally, he tried to fire his gun, and the pressure on the trigger would bring only a metallic click. Then he would insert a fresh magazine.

The Legion detachment had spread like a load of buckshot along the caravan, cutting out groups of camels from the mass, breaking orderly progress at twenty different points. The groups left in reserve with the pack-mules and ammunition charged over the crest and came galloping down with a great shout. Their appearance melted the last resistance, and the natives were in full flight.

Some one grasped Forester by the arm. "Eh, there, you caught a pip, didn't you?" It was Adjutant Collin. His hard fingers probed the buised cheek, pressed hard on the teeth. The American winced, as his head cleared. "You're lucky. No bone fractured, not even a tooth knocked out!"

Some distance away, a brace of automatic rifles reopened fire, in a leisurely chuckling cadence. Nearer, Legionnaires trotted by in the dazzling sunlight. A canteen was pushed into Forester's hands, and he drank warm water laced with *raki*. Slowly, events, people, place, came into focus; he knew where he was, what he had been doing. But his head throbbed like a decayed molar, as he blinked his eyes in the fierce light.

"Where's the lieutenant?" he asked. He remembered that he had seen Doberon go down.

"Over there—" Collin indicated Doberon, and Forester saw that the officer was conversing with Peterschen. "He's got a gash in the shoulder, and they hit him with clubs. Couple of ribs stoved in, I guess. Good thing you cleared him, though!"

"Why aren't we pursuing?" Forester wondered.

"Say," Collin laughed as he replied, "we'll be lucky if they don't come back! Those swine can fight: In less than an hour, we count thirty-four casualties! No, we mustn't be hogs. Better leave some of them for the Gourrama cavalry that's waiting for them at the next well. Sergeant Porti—" the adjutant beckoned to a non-com. "How did we make out, so far?"

"Well, we got seventy-two sound camels, seven mules, four asses and a couple of oxen. All their unwounded horses got away. Probably fifty camel-loads of stuff scattered around. Located eighteen of their stiffs so far, but there's a lot more in the dunes. We'll get around to them later—"

The words battered in Forester's brain like drops of fire. Instinctively, his eyes were on Doberon and Peterschen. The officer seemed very weak, backed against a bale of merchandise. The sergeant, cool and confident as ever, loomed before him, gesturing.

The American walked nearer.

"Not as long as I live," Peterschen was saying: "A bargain's a bargain! No, I don't want to read what she wrote you to show me. I don't—"

"For the last time, Peterschen—" Doberon's voice was desperate, pleading.

Forester understood he was begging to be freed of his promise.

Peterschen laughed and turned around. He walked a few steps, passed Forester without a sign of recognition. His eyes blazed, and his chin and jaws were edged with gleaming beads of perspiration. The American went toward the lieutenant, who had pushed himself up and away from the bale, reeled uncertainly.

"Peterschen, turn around—"

DOBERON'S voice had risen in a scream. He held an automatic in his right hand, aimed at the sergeant. Forester stepped out of the line of fire, too bewildered to think for the moment. And he saw Peterschen whirl, spot the pistol menacing him. He saw the German's teeth show in a rapid, almost happy grin as his hand found his own weapon.

"Don't shoot!" Forester called. He stepped back between the two, facing Doberon, his shoulder blades to Peterschen. And he ran up to the lieutenant.

"Get out of the way, Nick," he heard his friend shout: "He wants it that way and it has to happen—"

Forester grasped Doberon's wrist, felt a jar, heard the shot. For a moment, the officer struggled. Then he went limp and collapsed against the bale.

But, twenty feet away, Peterschen had fallen headlong. His fabulous luck had petered out. A Legionnaire's bullet had dropped him!

Peterschen was suffering, and his breathing resembled a prolonged moan. His tormented face seemed to reflect the greenish hue of the sunset sky from which the golden flood of the sun had melted. Forester sat at his side, behind the canvas lean-to that separated him from the other wounded.

"I'm telling you the truth, Karl: You've got a good chance of coming through. I don't think the lungs are touched." The American wiped a cloth over his comrade's lips, showed it to him: "See, almost no blood. Sure, you feel pretty sick—what do you expect? The ambulance plane will be here in the morning. You'll be in a good hospital by noon, and you're due for convalescence leave in the North."

"Sure, convalescence leave—" Peterschen laughed feebly. "I'm glad you got in the way, Nick. Don't feel badly." His feverish hand, rubbery and hot, clasped Forester's wrist: "Even if I croak. It's better this way. I'm not scared, you know. You told Collin what I said?"

"Yes. Everybody'll keep quiet, Karl."

"I'd like to settle things."

"What things?"

"About Josephine and the lieutenant."

"Wait until you get well."

"Suppose I don't? Let me talk to him, will you?"

"I'll see how he is—" Forester agreed. He located Doberon, who was with Collin. The officer's torso was swathed in bandages. He reeked of disinfectant. The adjutant was lighting a cigarette for him, and he peered up at Forester with an embarrassed expression.

"He isn't—"

"No. He's asking for you, Lieutenant."

With Collin supporting him, he went toward the shelter where the senior-sergeant rested. He eased himself down to a sitting position, grunting with the pain of his wounds. Collin and Forester started to leave, but Peterschen recalled them. "Eh, you'll be needed to make this official!"

When the three were gathered close, the wounded man asked for a drink, then started to talk.

"It's agreed nothing of this goes in the report, eh, Lieutenant? I want it the way you'd have wished it if it had been you instead of me. I want to explain something to you, Lieutenant. It's hard to talk about, but I'll do my best. Women are foolish about some things, and if I died, maybe Jo—Miss Metayer—would get a sort of foolish notion about me and spoil her life on my account.

"I'm no idiot, Lieutenant. I knew all along that you would be better for her than I could. You are a gentleman with a fine future. And that's what worried me. You have a family that's pretty stuck on itself. They'll kick about you marrying the kid of a cafe-keeper. They'll make trouble. But you've got to show guts and stick with her.

"Tell her, even if I get over this, that I said for you two to go ahead. And so

(Continued on page 125)

By GEORGE C. APPELL

Of a sudden, Perkins knew where the Nambus were. He understood why there were no vines on the bell tower and no priests in the temple. The guns were placed up there, and the gunners were making talk.

ILLUSTRATED BY MONROE EISENBERG

THE RUBBER MONKEY

SOMETIME after midnight, clouds obscured the moon. The gradual effect of semi-darkness was not immediate upon the column—it had been plugging north up the miles of China for so long that the ragged, march-borne intervals were automatically maintained for perhaps ten minutes. And then the swart little man with the tin collar tabs of a major-general slipped into a pot hole and went down on his hands, gasping. The company commander's knees struck the general's butt and the general cursed classically in his native Mandarin. The col-

umn closed like a folding accordion on the two hung men and beltings hit beltings and a muttered mixture of Cantonese and hill patois sibilated down the files to the American, marching at the rear with the pack train.

Lieutenant Perkins didn't blame anyone for the clumsy incident; it happens all the time all over the world when men seek other men's throats by stealth; but blameless as it had been, it could still endanger the entire reconnaissance and maybe destroy it. If the Jap heard them coming they saw him...

Perkins felt for the cinchings on his bedroll, lashed to the slant-ribbed near mule, and tested them with finger tugs. They were holding fast, and that pleased him mightily for the bedroll was the only thing that connected him with a world and a way of living that now seemed to be a hundred lifetimes in the past.

It had been less than a month since he'd been assigned to the Gimo's armies as a liaison officer; it had seemed like a century.

The word came sifting down to him. "Foreign-devil—forward."

The clouds drifted clear of the moon and it hung high and small and frozen crystal. The moist globes of the near mule's eyes were startlingly close, and Perkins was ashamedly aware of a fact he had refused to recognize since sundown: that he had been crowding the animal, primitively seekful of its lumpy protection. Instinct had told him to stay close, to acknowledge a potential shrapnel shield when he saw one. Reason had informed him that the chances of a man getting hit are the same in a group as they are when he is alone. But at night, among strangers, in the dread loneliness of the river country, you seldom heed reason.

PERKINS made his way up the column, seeing once more the faces that he had come to know from four days on the march. Hearing again the familiar sounds of men in motion—the tinkle of a sling swivel, the creak of a bandoleer. The inrush of a sudden yawn. He patted his equipment, item for item, reacting to habit: service Colt and extra clip; canteen, almost empty now; first aid packet; field glasses. All the stuff he wouldn't dare leave in his bedroll. Stuff they'd cut his throat to get.

The general had risen from the mud and was wiping his hands on his aide's coat.

"Ah—Meigwode jungwei! Ni lei ma?"

"No," Perkins lied. "I'm not tired." He was fagged out, his lean legs weighed a ton apiece and his belly muscles cross-wrenched him when he walked. He felt that he was more tired than the men of the command, though he knew that he was not.

The general sneezed. He was a stout-cheeked man with tiny eyes and a mouth too small for his face. He was horribly pock-marked. He said, "This is a good place to kill that mule and cook him. We can proceed at dawn."

The aide wanted to know, "Which mule, General?" The aide wore glasses, and when he turned his head the moonlight was caught in the lenses like two sheets of cup-flung water.

"The sick one. The one who limps."

Perkins ventured, "General, if I may suggest?" The American had no command function, he could only advise, and this advice would doubtless do no good. "Fires—so close to the Rubber Monkey—would disclose our position and intentions." Perkins spoke slowly, his Mandarin still tripped and stumbled and he had trouble making it behave.

The general bent over, raised a hand to his face, and blew his nose through his fingers. "When I want your thoughts—" he wiped a wrist across his nostrils—"I'll ask for them." He snapped his fingers clean.

Perkins could have strangled him. The man would be better off dead, and so would the war effort.

"Aide!" The general clacked his fingers. "Fires by platoons. Post security. We move out at daybreak."

The general had not bothered to consult the company commander, he had come along for the walk, and he was operating from the level of his own rank and not from that of a line subordinate. "Kill that mule, too." He sneezed again.

Perkins faced sharp away from the man and started back down the column, a panic whimper of fear disturbing the thin curtain of his self-control. Some of the men

were squatting, forearms dangling off knees, not talking. They reminded Perkins of little tan birds in their pitiful rope sandals and linen shorts and cloth caps.

The thought was nagging his consciousness that somewhere ahead in the moonshadow the Rubber Monkey was sitting on his haunches, licking his paws and waiting.

He would be solidly entrenched, would the Jap, and he would have his Nambu light machine guns registered on every meter of open country within front range of him. And he would have mortars, too.

The fear flickered through Perkins again, like the throb of a cut artery. It tightened his chest, it dried out his mouth. It made his hands feel heavy. He stepped to the cord halter of his mule to permit the condemned animal to be led past. Fires were beginning to smolder and smut, scenting the night with the acridity of burning dung.

Ninety-two men and four officers, mused Perkins. No—three officers, for the lieutenant had been missing since afternoon. Ninety-two twittering birds, one politically appointed general, an aide —and a captain.

Perkins touched off a cigarette and inhaled deeply and exhaled slowly. The noise of a blade on rock was discordant in his ears; a man with a canvas bucket hurried past, anxious to catch some blood when the knife slashed in. Perkins dragged his eyes the length of the huddled platoons, and a great unrest of soul entered him. For this was nothing like he had imagined it would be when he was safely Stateside in language school. Then, it had been masses of infantry screened by soft-stepping scouts and covered with snarling planes. It had been field music and lumbering tanks growling in their cleated treads. It had been the firm laughter of men impulsively cooperating in a common cause of the defense of their birthright.

Perkins felt sick. He dropped his cigarette into the mud and watched it hiss out. He swung his head this way and that, trying to note terrain features. The road was sunken here, and atop each shallow bank were trees waving naked limbs in twisted derision.

Ahead, according to the map, was a village on a plain. Yellow Dragon Village, it was, and about three *li*—or one mile—from the sunken road. And another mile north of the village was a ridge with a temple on its southern slope and rice paddies below the temple and a stream this side of the paddies, bisecting the plain. Perkins had tried to envisage the temple —small, solid, and draped with the inanimate dignity of years. Surrounded by green-bearded banyan trees and offering a haven from the monsoon-soaked landscape. It would have tiled roofs and a bell tower and vines would be laced over the tiles. It was something he must describe to Martha, if he ever saw it. And suddenly she was far away—not just 12,000 miles away, in California, but far beyond the end of those hundred lifetimes separating him from his chosen manner of living.

The soprano stutter of cartilage-ripped agony came like shrapnel. It vibrated off on its echoes and died. Unshod hooves thrashed, kicking to the final impulses of life. A butchering squad moved in, and the lunging eagerness of steel sated itself in rib cages and haunches and quivering withers. The hooves were limp in the sticky mud and they were lifted, lopped off and slung into the cook pots. When boiled with the meat and some bunch grass, they would make a salty stew that would swell a man's intestines and stoke him up for a full day's march.

UNACCOUNTABLY the image of Len Rixey filled Perkins' mind. Rixey, with his brittle eyes and sad grin. Rixey, with a funeral foreboding of his own fate: "Thing is with a sloppy general, he won't take care of his men. He'll walk right into the Monkey's front yard like a man going to the barn, then find himself caught by the seat. Then he runs out and leaves the men to absorb the flyin' iron."

Rixey, who had gone out on his third liaison tour the month before and never been heard from again. Neither had the general who had signed a chit for him, so the accounts remained square. There hadn't been much speculation about it. Perkins could see with frightful clarity what had happened. Rixey's general strolling right through the Jap positions, blind to ambush from behind. Rixey feel-

ing an icy feather race up his spine. Whirling then, clawing for his handgun, seeing the copper sickle curving at him from three sides. Seeing a runty Jap squeezing off shots from an 8 mm. Arisaka. Feeling the slugs rip through his stomach and chest. Feeling nothing else, seeing nothing else . . . An Arisaka spins you off your feet fast.

Perkins heard the word passed for him; he trudged past the platoon fires, sniffing the noisome stews. He presented himself to the general.

"I have signed for you, *jungwei,* and you must stay near me at all times." The general spat and tongued his flat lips. "Soon we will dine." He whacked hard palms together. "Then we will push north and locate the Monkey and call our bombing planes to his position."

It all seemed like depressingly inaccurate guesswork, to Perkins. It seemed so futile, this probing the lines from Manchuria to Mandalay, searching for tender spots, feeling for a hole. And always the Jap either absorbed the thrust or threw it off, and in either case he was resilient. A Rubber Monkey.

A waste of effort, a waste of time. A waste of lives. Perkins forced the image of Len Rixey from him. "Our security is posted, General?"

"It is!" The general's upper lip stiffened. He sank a hand into his tunic front and groped.

"Where does the general believe that the Jap awaits us?"

Perkins tried to sound polite. He had been ordered to stay on his manners, back at base in Kunming; to take what came, to play it as dealt.

"Where we find him," the general finally blurted. It sounded good, very pukka. It would have sounded better two hundred years before, when contact with the enemy was a more chanceful thing.

The general brought a flask from his tunic and offered it. "Vodka?"

"Thank you." Perkins had not yet seen a weapon on the general, the man was wary of kick and buck and knuckle-burn. He preferred it this way, with vodka. The vodka seared Perkins' stomach, but it made him feel better. He lighted another cigarette.

The aide was opening a wicker travelling basket. In the light from the nearest fire it resembled an under-sized bamboo coffin. The aide found napkins, a pair of silver chopsticks which he handed to the general, and a case of reed chopsticks which he extended first to the company commander and then to Perkins.

The general's striker grabbed a pewter pot and lugged it away.

The company commander was uncertain about something. He put his weight on one leg, shifted it to the other; glanced from the general to Perkins. Then he levelled tired eyes on the general. "There will be a point in the morning?"

Surprise widened the general's swart features. "An advance guard?" His shoulders lifted and fell. "Announce our coming?"

In that moment Perkins' diaphragm fell away from his lungs and he had fear. Not the precautionary fear that is such a valuable instinct in the field, nor the blind fear that is the absence of all instinct. He had the personal, selfish fear that warned him that he might never get home again. It was a sensate thing, a gray beast stalking soundlessly. He reminded himself that a man without fear is not a whole soldier, for he is only half a man. But the reminder didn't stick, and he knew shame.

—Come on, Perk, perk up. Joke: Perkins perks up. You're not a little boy again, waiting under the porch awning for your mother to fend off the unpleasant things of life. And there are no cookies and milk waiting for you if you get home on time. This is it, this is the ultimate. In one moment a man is all he ever was or is or ever will be, and everything else leads up to that moment or away from it. It's the memory your child will hold for you and shape himself on, and a child is the only true immortality a man can ever have. So what'll you do, Perk?

The general's striker returned with the pot smoking.

"Gentlemen?" The general was beaming. "Share, please." The flask of vodka was nowhere in sight, and it occurred to Perkins that the man was a bit drunk.

The platoons were bunching up around cook fires, scrambling for a chance at the pots. A scrawny man was dipping his cloth cap into the stew, laughing. Sweet-

feet, they called him. Remarkably undersized, for a Hunnanese. Drafted the year before, and with the blue cutmarks of the drafting rope still deep in his slender wrists. He ladled up some steaming slop and stepped away, grinning and sipping.

"Jungwei?" It was the general's aide indicating the pot. The general was holding his personal bowl to his chin, hand-milling food into his mouth with continuous, circular motions of his silver chopsticks.

Perkins stood aside and waited for the company commander. The captain was a Whampoa graduate and ploddingly conscientious in his duties, and Perkins felt an affinity for him.

The general paused, jaws chomping. He swallowed, and through his side teeth said, "Share the pot, all." He was polite because he was pleased; and he was pleased because he was eating.

The limitless white wash of the paling moon was flooding the plain beyond the road and Perkins thought he could discern the serrated roofings of Yellow Dragon Village. Mist tatters clung to hollows in the road and floated along shallow banks.

The men were moving back into formation, already the fires were crumbling to coals and in the sallow light the command resembled a long train of imperishable ghosts.

The company commander was inquiring for his lieutenant, but nobody was inclined to answer. The general's belch rattled smartly and the aide began collecting bowls and chopsticks.

DAWN was a chill grayness running with the wet wind across the skies. The wind was out of the east that morning, and there can be a threatful whisper of evil in the east wind. Even as they stood waiting, dawn melted to daylight.

For some reason that he could not explain wholly, Perkins remained at the head of the column. For one thing, he didn't want to miss a single opportunity to suggest to the general that as a reconnaissance column, the command was not tactically deployed, was a loose-moving target with too much depth, had no local security and was ripe for ambush. For another thing, he was finding comfort in the presence of the company commander. The man knew his job, even if he couldn't to anything about it.

Day breathed oppressively on them, and it held the threat of weather.

The general and his aide tramped out from between the banks of the sunken road and onto the open plain, followed by the basket-bearing striker. Perkins heard the captain's out-breathing: "Announce our coming?" Then the man brought the command to attention with a spang-sharp *"Li juh!"* and ordered it forward. Ahead, smoke tendrils from the village seeped west from early cook fires. The village seemed to be the only living thing on a plain mute-yellow in a trance of mud.

A mile beyond the village, and black against the pearl-hard northern sky, was the ridge. Perkins still couldn't find the temple on its southern slope, but bone-deep in him was the knowledge that it would be there. He felt again for his pistol, his first aid packet, and canteen.

The general called, "It smells like the Monkey!"

The captain inhaled swiftly, and pointed. *"Neige tswendz.* That village."

Perkins saw the grave mounds east of the broken walls. Dogs had been worrying at one of the mounds during the night, and a shrunken human head and shoulders lay exposed in the gray mud.

Perkins tried breathing through his mouth instead of his nostrils, but that gave him the impression of tasting the green horror that came on the wind. He held his breath for as long as he could, and that was more acceptable.

The command tramped past the village in full daylight, marching to the irregular barking of dogs. The aide cupped a hand and addressed a very old man who stood under a tree sucking the bamboo stem of a water pipe. *"You Rben bing dzai juh ma?"*

"Japanese troops here?" The old man shook his head carefully, as if afraid that it might fall off. A silly expression was on his time-rutted face. *"Swoyoude Rben dou bujyanle."*

"Thank you." The aide said to the general, "You heard? The Japanese have all disappeared. They must be retreating northward. Perhaps we will not make

contact at all." Simpering, he added, "In my miserable opinion, I mean."

The command left the village behind and marched up the last mile leading to the ridge. The general was saying that on the ridge they would get some rest and inspect the terrain to the north. If nothing of interest was there, they would reverse course and return to base by easy stages.

The aide agreed heartily. He fully realized what the Rubber Monkey did to his prisoners and how much he savored the sickening science of the bayonet as live training for his recruits.

Perkins felt relief wash through him at the prospect of a bivouac. They had not slept since the night before, they were in no condition to fight now, and by tomorrow they would be soft for the killing.

The aide, as he slogged along, eased a hand back to the wooden holster he carried on his belt. A Luger's beaded butt protruded from the holster, souvenir of the German Military Mission that had trained the Gimo's troops until 1938.

Perkins wondered if the fellow could use it. Probably not, he decided. He twisted his head around and viewed the files behind him, and in his eyes there rose the faint echo of all those other columns that now were thrusting into Europe and island-hopping up the Pacific. He swallowed sandily and faced forward, a glumness deep in the cellars of his soul.

He spotted the temple, then. It was hardly visible in its banyan grove, but a bell tower stuck up like a white thumb beckoning them on. He uncased his glasses, raised them, and focussed on the tower. A single shuttered window was just below the roof. There were no vines. He shut one eye to eliminate interference of the mil scale and elevated to the ridge. It looked slippery and cold. Its crest was vagabonded with weather-chewed bushes that were stripped of their foliage and bent in all directions.

He lowered his glasses and cased them.

The muddy drift of the stream flowed from west to east between viscous banks; on its far side, paddies rose steeply to the temple grove like rectangular stairs cut into the slope. The ridge, as they approached it, grew higher; and as it grew higher, Perkins' optimism grew lower. It looked almost sheer, from the plank bridge across the stream; and the temple seemed smaller than ever.

The slap-scuff slap-scuff of sandals crossing the planking was loud and harsh, and louder still was the thumping of hooves on wood as the half dozen mules picked their way onto the bridge. The command was halfway across now, with fifty yards to go.

Rain spatted from low skies, all at once. It brushed against faces and tapped at clothing and tickled hands. It plucked at the stream's steady flow and made a smothered, hushing sound that mingled with the sound of marching feet. It whispered into the west and smoked away across the plain.

Perkins' nerve-net was frayed raw now and the sour brown taste of bile was in his mouth.

Mule stew is not the tastiest thing in the world to march on, especially when there is a hideous, odds-against chance that you are marching out your very destiny. Perkins tried to spit, and couldn't.

THE rain stopped suddenly, as it does during monsoon. It ceased as if some celestial faucet had been shut off, and a queer silence descended on the command as it left the bridge and picked up the pace in the mud beyond. Even their sandals were hushed; it was as if they were attempting to tip-toe, and when Perkins looked back at them their mouths were slack and their eyes were glazed and it occurred to him that he must look the same way. He followed the general, the aide, and the basket-laden striker straight up the path between paddies toward the temple. The general was quite sober, the exertion of the uphill pace was blackening his shoulders and back with sweat, and when he slipped he recovered quickly.

The aide wasn't doing so well. Perspiration steamed his spectacles and he had to remove them and wipe them frequently, which put his myopic eyes on crutches and made him stumble and claw downward for balance. It was when he was wiping them for the fourth time, shoulders

low, that Perkins looked over the man's hunched head and saw something move on the ridge crest. A branch, he thought. He was acutely conscious of itching socks and prickling palms.

The aide raised his head and straightened his shoulders, eyes off crutches again.

The company commander was about to say something when he clamped down hard on it and stopped marching, one knee outthrust.

There was a whiplash, but no lash crack.

The captain cried the dread word: "Mortars!"

The buckling column froze tight.

The whiplash became a brass screech, an ear-splitting wail. The wail became a roar and the roar a thunderclap that tore four paddies out of the slope in a leaping roil of smoke and flame and rocks and mud and spinning green shoots. The hot, gaseous breath of the shell pushed against those who still were standing.

Hearing returned to Perkins' numb ears, and he was surprised to find himself flat in the mud. He was not at all surprised at his tardy deduction that upon the ridge was a mortar observation post and that behind it were mortar batteries. Not the knee mortars used for mobile advance or tree bursts, but the big boys. Entrenched and sand-bagged and webbed together with telephone wire.

The whiplash cut the skies again.

Dull in Perkins' ears was the rushing thump of stampeding mules plunging drunkenly toward the stream. Sharp-brittle was the angry thutter of a Nambu firing from close at hand. The machine gun racked the animals off flying hooves and left them rolling in a crazy, downhill confusion of legs and bedrolls and hocks and jaws.

The second shell hit down-slope where the column had been and shook the world apart and bounced bodies out of the mud and dropped them back into it. The jouncing shock of shrapnel shuddered past with the effect of rivet guns. A whirling chunk of iron was speeding toward the aide. It was going right into him.

It smashed through his stomach and ripped out his kidneys and blew him off the path into a paddy. His splintered wooden holster flipped gracefully upward and hung on its arc and plopped into the mud near Perkins. Smoke dipped away wraith-like.

The general was flat on his side, crouching behind a small rise in the mud. He searched for his striker, eyes clouded with horror. He found his striker sitting against a tree where he had been flung, blue-faced and quiet. Blood sobbed from the man's chest and soaked into the broken wicker basket.

There were some living back there, but not many. The company commander was no longer by Perkins' side, he was bucking up and down in the lower mud, thrashing his torso off dead thighs and legs to throw off the anchoring shackles of a snapped spine.

The Nambu chitter-thuttered and the captain quivered violently to its impact and sank into the mud.

The morning took back its silence from the smoke-laced air, and Perkins was in a dream. It was a weird dream that seemed to make quick changes with reality, so that he was never quite certain where he was or what he was hearing. He listened to the Nambu chatter smartly and he was sure that he heard a hissing and quacking somewhere—the slurping tooth-and-lipness of Japanese being spoken in a hurry.

Presently the general's striker toppled over onto one shoulder, and dead fingers released the remains of the basket. Death, quoted Perkins from some mostly-forgotten manual, automatically terminates individual property responsibility.

The hidden Nambu dusted the paddies below and made white water in the stream. The Monkey had struck with the mannered precision of a cat, and now he was inspecting his kill. The hissing and quacking came again; the copper sickle was immobile for the moment, having cut cleanly to the roots.

Of a sudden, Perkins knew where the Nambus were. He understood why there were no vines on the bell tower and no priests in the temple. The guns were emplaced up there, and the gunners were making talk.

The urge to take command was vibrant in Perkins. He didn't want to take it for himself or for three lines in a mimeo-

graphed citation, he wanted it because the general was helpless and totally unfit to command anything.

There was little to command. The torn and simmering chunks of flesh on the smoking trail could not respond to orders, most assuredly; the shreds of charred cloth would never again be uniforms for the living or the dead. Perkins centered his mind on the old man with the water pipe back in Yellow Dragon Village. He had seemed silly, vague, listless. Would that old man have been drawing opium into his shrunken lungs? Would he have obtained it from the Jap in exchange for passing along misinformation to Chinese columns? Worse things than that had happened already. Since 1942, the Monkey had been offering fifteen hundred dollars gold for American junior officers, delivered alive. And since 1942 he had paid out almost ten thousand dollars, gold.

THE quacking from the bell tower stopped. The general was moving, was drawing his knees up and planting the heels of his hands behind him. He was getting ready to spring. He sprang. He propelled himself downward in three wide-legged leaps and dove into a paddy and splashed from sight. The Nambu chittered fitfully, and went still. The shots slocked into the lower paddies, twenty yards nearer the stream.

Perkins almost smiled. The Nambus could not depress, could not fire into the upper paddies flanking the base of the tower. Carefully, cautiously, he slid out a hand and closed his cold fingers around the Luger's beaded butt. It came easily out of the splintered holster. He stuck it into the top of his field jacket, between the zipper and the scarf knot. He did the rest fast: crabbed around and rolled off the mud and flew at the paddy and catapulted into it with the snicker of a Nambu in his ears. He crashed into the field slime and fell against something shapeless and clay-colored and felt his boots sinking into the bottom mud. He waded clear of the dead aide's shapelessness and stared at the general.

The man was yellow-eyed with fear and rigid of muscle. He was scarcely able to breathe.

"Kwaide-kwaide," Perkins gasped. "Hurry." He drew out the Luger and hefted it.

The general didn't seem to understand. He rested his eyes on the Luger as if he had never seen one before.

The yammering of two Nambus firing together made them both snap their heads around. The bullets were plowing into the next paddy, sending sprays of mud slapping upward. "Five minutes," Perkins guessed aloud. "They'll be here in five minutes. One will stay in the tower, and the other will come down . . . ready?"

The general found his voice. "Ready?"

"Yes, dammit—ready to—" Perkins bit it off and switched to Mandarin. "We must depart. By some method. I must get back and report to base. Fast." He gazed at the stream, twenty yards down. It was just possible that if he could reach the stream, the current would carry him east out of range of the Nambus. A long shot, but the only one. He could duck under the surface and beat the slugs with six inches of moving water over his head.

A strange expression was crossing the general's face. One Nambu sputtered and sent mud spinning.

Perkins waded up to the general. He snagged the Luger around and thrust it butt first at the general. With his left hand he opened the cutoff. "General? I have a suggestion."

The general took it as a child accepts a strange toy. He was still examining it as Perkins sloshed to the forward side of the paddy. A great calmness was settling into his mind and muscles and he moved without hesitating or fumbling, as if he had done this many times before. He kicked off his heavy combat boots and struggled out of his musette bag and peeled off his field jacket. His Colt, his canteen and first-aid packet he retained. He was stripped for speed, not inspection. He placed his hands on top of the mud wall and counted one . . . two . . .

The clap of the Luger punched through his hearing and he looked behind him just in time to see the general fold forward into the water.

Perkins took a deep, lung-cracking breath, braced his legs, gripped the paddy wall and hurled himself into the open.

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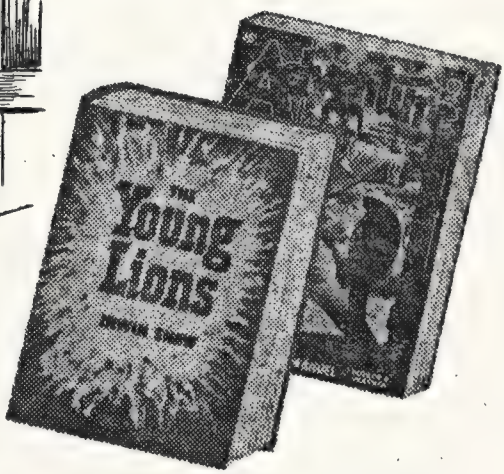

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STRANGE GUEST

There was a blur of white, a thrashing too fast for the eye to follow—and incredibly Whizzer was on his back, legs kicking frantically.

By BROWNING NORTON

JARM POTTER was hunched over the simmering stewpot in his crumbling cabin by the Deep Dark River when the strange white dog came out of the velvet night to stand in the open door.

Jarm didn't hear him, he was that quiet; but Jarm, being not quite right in the head and so only a peg above the animal kingdom, at last sensed with an animal's perception another presence there, and twisted warily to regard the queer creature in the doorway. At first it gave him a turn, it did, for his slow thoughts had been strongly upon dogs—or rather, his lack of one. And now this fellow, so different, milk white, turned to stone in the black square of door, like as if he, Jarm, had purely conjured a thing up out of his own mind.

But no, this here was a flesh-and-blood

ILLUSTRATED BY DANIEL PIERCE

dog, sure enough, for now it lifted its odd slanty head with the pricked ears and sniffed the stew aroma. Still eying it across his shoulder, Jarm was filled with a surging elation and a happy presentiment flashed across his simple mind.

"Mebbe," he mused, "the Lord done sent me him to beat down the sinful pride of the Guthrie Potters. Mebbe this here's the dawg!"

With the thought rose an instant fear that he would lose him, that the white stranger would whirl and vanish into the night as he had come. But the creature sniffed the stew smell again and took one cautious step into the room.

Jarm spoke to him then, softly, croonингly. "You hungry, boy? Come, boy, we havin' stew f'supper."

MOVING with unusual grace and with an almost eerie quality of assurance, the dog took three more forward steps and now stood quite close to Jarm. They exchanged stares for an instant and then Jarm, scarcely breathing, turned away and began unhurriedly to dish out stew, meanwhile talking sweet and low.

"Got rabbit stew, boy, mighty tasty when a fellow's ribs is rubbin'." He heaped up a portion, set it off to cool and eased back on his haunches, studying the dog, noting the thin flanks and short white coat stained with woods travel.

"You come a far piece, boy?" he murmured. "Ain' none like you in these hills I never see. What are you, anyhow?"

The stew having cooled, he set the pan on the crumbling floor and immediately the dog began to eat—not ravenous and slobbering as a starved hound would—but with deliberation and care. Jarm moved around him, then, and quietly shut the door, and the dog stopped eating to watch him in a queer contemplative way, as if he knew exactly what Jarm was up to and that it would do him no good. The deep-set eyes made Jarm vaguely uneasy, and he began to talk soothingly again. He wondered what Cul and Ran and Fairfax Potter would say to this fellow, and the thought stretched a grin on his guileless face. Maybe he'd show his taunting cousins a trick or two with this boy . . . maybe. Jarm had never seen a one like this, but he knew quality in a dog; and this fellow's grace, clean lines and muscular shoulders spoke volumes. He didn't know the pit breed. To him dog quality meant just one thing—good hunter. No other kind of dog made any sense to him. Tomorrow they'd go up the hill a piece and try on birds. Most likely he was a birder, Jarm decided.

It was late now. The white, having finished, sat before the pan and watched Jarm finger stewed rabbit into his mouth. Afterward, Jarm raked out part of his own bed and made a nest of it, but the dog nosed it briefly, disdained it, and went to lie in front of the fireplace.

"Kin'a uppity, ain' you, boy?" Jarm murmured. He secured the door, sought his blankets in the corner and was soon asleep . . .

It wouldn't have happened if he hadn't sat up so late that he napped past his rising time. It had happened before, though, and always it filled Jarm with the same consuming rage. He was out of his blankets and onto his feet, his face working, as the derisive thump of the clod sounded against the cabin. He rushed to the door, squeezed out, closing it behind him, and was shaking his fist angrily before the bright April sun clearly let him see the two lean figures standing below his cabin by the bank of the Deep Dark.

"Mornin', Jarm," Ran Potter said mockingly. "Nigh time you was risin', ain' it?"

"Cuss you, Ran!" Jarm yelled, fairly dancing. "Ain' I warn' you, don' pelt my place with clods? Some day you gonna be mighty regretful!"

The older brother, Cul, chuckled. "Why, Jarm! You ack right unneigborly!" He held out his rifle and a squirrel carcass. "We taken a turn around an' seen your dead chimley. Sure don' want you a-molderin' there all day."

"Not t'day, anyhow," Ran put in. "Not when we gonna try our new birder, Fawn, along with Curly in Birchwood Hollow. Why 'n'cha fetch your dawgs up an' test 'em again' our'n?" And with this the brothers broke into roars of malicious laughter.

Jarm stood tight-lipped and reddening at the taunt; and as the two, still laughing, moved off, he suddenly bawled, "Wait

now!" When they halted expectantly he went on more slowly, already regretting his words, "I got a dawg'll beat your'n all hollow!"

"You ain' gone an' got another *dawg?*" Ran asked in feigned amazement. "After what Ol' Brown done t' that last mutt you had?"

"He'll beat your'n all hollow," Jarm repeated doggedly.

"He's foolin'," Cul declared judiciously.

"Yep, jus' monk'ing," Ran agreed solemnly. "He ain't got no dawg."

And the brothers drifted away tormentingly.

"You wait!" Jarm yelled angrily. He turned, thrust open the door, snapping his fingers, and called, "Come, boy!"

THE white fellow appeared in the doorway and the jaws of the brothers dropped in surprise.

"Man!" Cul managed. "What kin'a dawg's that?"

"Nev' mind. He's good, that's what."

"Ain' likely," Ran decided. "Don' recollect ever seein' *his* sort. Reckon he's a pet-dawg. Ain' no hunter, anyhow."

Stung, Jarm cried, "He'll hol' up his end!" And then he added rashly, "I'll match him again' any your'n!"

At this the lean brothers exchanged a glance and Ran said with false graveness, "Oh, no, Jarm. Don' reckon you'd better. Your dawgs is always triflin'. Just' don' think on it, boy. Don' even think of fetchin' him up to Birchwood Hollow. Why, even our new pup, Fawn, 'd make him sing mighty blue. Don' bring him. We'll be sorry for you, mind."

Jarm swallowed the bait. His lips set in a thin line. "We'll be along," he answered, breathing hard. "Me'n' white boy here'll be in Birchwood Hollow directly after noon. Jus' don' set Ol' Brown on him like you done my las' one's all I ask. We'll be there, hear?"

"A'right," Cul grinned. "We got your word, Jarm."

But after they had gone and Jarm was back inside, fixing something for him and the dog to eat, his anger cooled and his confidence oozed away. This wasn't at all how he'd meant to do. He'd fixed it in his mind to try this fellow out, explore his ways secretly, and then when he was mortal certain, spring him on the Guthrie Potters. But now he'd talked himself into a trial this very afternoon and he couldn't well evade it, short of becoming worse laughingstock than he already was.

Maybe white boy, here, could pull him out of this mess, but it weren't hardly fair to put all on the dog, he told himself. As he moved around the cabin while the dog lay by the fire, Jarm began to study him again and some of his confidence returned. The dog was quality, sure enough. He marked the long head, skull flat and wide at the short pointed ears, then tapering into the muzzle, the triangular black eyes, the queer sweet arch to the neck, muscular sloping shoulders, wide breast and deep chest. The dog's build was puzzling, the short back, falling slightly from the withers, the straight slim legs, low hocks and dainty cat-like feet, the tail, thick at the body and tapering to a point, carried low. But here, all told, was an essence of power and balance, of intelligence, yes, and of something else—some lurking, hidden thing.

And Jarm's mercurial spirits began to soar quickly.

"You got t'be a birder, boy," Jarm told him now. "Sure wisht you could talk. Ain' likely you're no fox dawg . . . no . . . n'r no coon dawg neither. Rabbit, 'r birds, I calc'late, an' mebbe both. You boun' t'be somethin'! Reckon I got us into this, an' now you got t'get us out. Gotta show some style in Birchwood Hollow with them Guthrie Potters lookin' on. You hear?"

There was no deep-seated enmity between Jarm and the Guthrie Potters, not really. When old Guthrie was alive he'd been mighty good to Jarm, for Jarm was his own brother's boy, orphaned young. Until he was nineteen, Jarm had lived right with the others in the Guthrie Potter place up the hill. But being slow of wit, he was always target for the baiting tricks of Cul and Ran and Fairfax. He'd stood it while old Guthrie lived, for his uncle understood and held the cousins off. But for all his dullness, Jarm had an independent spirit, and when the old man died seven years ago, why Jarm lit out, moving to this small empty cabin where his

mother's folks had lived. Cul and Ran and Fairfax still plagued him when they could, for now it was a fixed habit, natural as breath. Mostly, of late, their baiting concerned dogs, for they had good ones and Jarm none, or at best from time to time some mongrel mutt that the Gutherie Potter men and dogs laughed and chased right off the hills, for Jarm lived from hand to mouth and had no means to get him dogs like Cul and Ran and Fairfax had.

WHEN they started for the hollow, the hot spring sun was just beyond the zenith, and the mountainside was a wash of lovely color, the breeze heady with the blended fragrance of dogwood and wisteria, faitly edged with cherry and wild crab. But Jarm was glum, for his misgivings had flowered, sickening away all confidence, and the dog's manner was the cause.

Jarm had decided he would not need to be led, that he'd stay by; how he had reached this decision he could not have told, for he had not so much as laid a hand upon the dog.

It was true, however, the fellow moved along willingly enough, but that was about all you could say. There was none of the hunter about him, no tendency to range, to scent, no gathering alertness, no questing eagerness. Instead he trotted close at heel, and Jarm's heart sank with the conviction that he had made a bad mistake. It looked like whatever he was, the dog was not a hunter, but pride kept Jarm from turning back, for he had passed his word.

Thus, man and dog continued up the trail till they topped a rise and Birchwood Hollow lay before them. The hollow was a natural amphitheater with a small marsh at its far reach, the bowl fairly open and dotted with low bush, grasses and berry shrubs, a favorite game bird rendezvous.

The Guthrie Potter place lay along the wagon road just over the ravine, so that Ran and Cul were already here, and Fairfax, the youngest brother, too—him tall and lean like them, with the same thin face and sardonic grin. The three made Jarm's stocky frame look squat and awkward. They stood among some trees at the hollow's edge, taking a smoke, while their mongrel setters, Curly and Fawn, ranged close by.

As Jarm and the white fellow appeared, great roars of wrath rose from the trees and Jarm noted uneasily that his cousins had Whizzer and Old Brown here chained to saplings.

These two dogs were big short-hair blacks with tan markings, long hound ears, fierce yellow eyes. Mighty night hunters of uncertain pedigree they were, but notoriously mean and bad-tempered, and Jarm could see but one reason why they had been fetched. He'd had dogs set upon before.

"Time you was gettin' here," Ran said crossly, knocking out his pipe. "You an' your mutt ready?"

"What's Whizzer an' Ol' Brown doin' here?" Jarm demanded. "You know what I tol' you—"

"Shucks, jus' givin' 'em a run," Ran answered evasively. "Le's go."

Whizzer and Old Brown still roared angrily, pulling against their chains, and Jarm glanced down at his dog apprehensively. But the white simply stood there, showing no fear or anything else, save that his black eyes held intently on the two great noisy beasts and his small ears were pricked.

"That there ain' no hunter!" Fairfax shouted derisively, laughing. "He's a town dawg strayed away, I reckon."

"That's what I tol' him," Ran broke in, grinning. "He ain' nothin' but a pet-dawg. Well, le's get started anyhow. Jarm, you put your mutt out over there, an' we'll start here an' work down across the hollow."

"That dawg'll never raise a bird," Fairfax chuckled.

Tight-lipped and red, Jarm held his peace.

The brothers began moving down with Curly and Fawn ranging ahead, and at their left Jarm moved into the grass, too, softly coaxing the white fellow to get busy. But the dog simply did not, or would not understand and stayed at heel, and Jarm felt the sweat popping on his forehead. Before they'd moved a hundred yards the brothers were pointing and grinning, and finally Fairfax sat down on the ground

and began to laugh, and the others joined him till the unpleasant racket of their mirth bubbled like a poisonous brew in Jarm's ears.

"Him a hunter!" Fairfax gasped, beating his knee. "That funny-looking scairdy thing a hunter! This here's the best yet! Lookit him, jus' take a look at him," he cried.

"He's scairt to lift his nose from Jarm's heels."

"Yeah," Cul drawled between chuckles, "we always knowed you was head-soft, Jarm, but we never figgered you'd take a lap dawg for a hunter."

Ran had to get his two-bits' worth. "Man! I reckon a fellow without no brains jus' purely gets a no-brain dawg!"

Humiliated and plagued beyond endurance, trembling with anger, Jarm struck back blindly. "I never said he was no hunter! You fools, I said he'd beat any your'n. He could, too, 'f I'd let him! He'd chew their ears off!"

Before the bellowed words were out Jarm regretted them. Instantly the brothers quit laughing and exchanged meaningful glances, sly and veiled.

"You oughtn't a said that, Jarm," Cul told him righteously. "Mind, now, it's your idea, not our'n. We won't let Ol' Brown at him, anyhow. We ain' that mean. But he's got to face Whizzer. You challenged, so you did!" Cul turned to Ran; "Call Curly and Fawn in and tie 'em up," and then to Jarm, "We'll go back top where it's level. Take your mutt over by the fallen log. When we untie Whizzer, then let him come out—if he's got the gumption to."

SICK AT HEART, Jarm turned back with the white fellow at his heels, topped the rise and went over to the fallen log, while in the grove Whizzer and Old Brown again raged on their chaims. This was his own fault, Jarm admitted miserably, and his simple mind saw no way out of the dilemma. He slumped on the log, and the white sat near by, his unreadable eyes staring across the clearing, and when Jarm saw him so mild and unconcerned, he was stricken by shame. "It ain' right, boy," he apologized softly. "You was my guest, like, an' I done got you into this somehow. I'm powerful sorrowful."

The dog glanced up at him and Jarm reached a hand to pat, but before his fingers quite touched the slanty skull, the fellow ducked out from under quick and smooth, as an expert boxer slides a punch. Astonishment touched Jarm, but before he had time to think on it Cul called, "You ready?" and began to unchain Whizzer.

Jarm sat frozen. As Whizzer, mouthing canine curses, came loose from his chain, the white fellow was on his feet without a sound and trotted several quick steps into the open.

There he stood, cat-like in stance, waiting. And now big Whizzer came bounding toward him, eyes baleful, growling a hymn of hate.

The big hound rushed straight on in a frontal attack aimed at bowling his opponent over, and the smaller dog never moved until the other was almost on him. Suddenly there was a blur of white, a thrashing too fast for the eye to follow, and incredibly Whizzer was on his back, legs kicking frantically, and the white, jaws clamped to his neck, was chucking the big hound's head roughly against the ground.

Even Jarm stared in amazement. Fairfax was first to shake the spell. "He'll kill Whizzer!" Fairfax screamed, and Cul responded instantly, "Let Ol' Brown loose!"

"No!" Jarm yelled, but they paid him no mind, and now Old Brown, raging and mad-eyed, hackles on end, bolted into the fray. Jarm tried to scream a warning, but the white still held Whizzer down, choking his life away. Old Brown was on him now, but no, at the last instant the white hurled himself away like a cat, and the snarling hound rushed right over the spot, jaws snapping on air. Before he could recover, a white streak slashed him in the side, laying his flank open, and as the maddened hound bellowed and turned he was struck in the other flank. The white made never a sound and he moved like a wraith. Now he skimmed in straight and high, and Old Brown reared, opening his great jaws, but the milky demon feinted and swept low, seized the hound's far foreleg and threw

his weight against him, and Old Brown was down and the white was at the soft throat.

"Get your rifle, Ran!" Cul screeched. "Don' let that devil kill Ol' Brown!" And Ran started at a lope.

Black with rage, Jarm bounded toward Cul, tugging his knife from his belt. "No—you ain' gonna shoot that white dawg!"

"Call him off, then," Cul said sullenly, "'f'n' you can."

Whizzer still lay where the white had left him, retching for wind, and Old Brown choked and whispered, kicking feebly, as the sawing jaws edged nearer his windpipe.

Jarm stood over them. "A'right, boy," he said firmly, "le'go, now. Let him up! Back, boy!"

The white slackened his grip and listened. Jarm waved his arm. "Back, boy!" he urged again.

Reluctantly the dog loosed and gave ground a pace, looked at Old Brown and at Whizzer, then turned and trotted docilely back to the log.

Cul and Fairfax came over to stare queerly at him, and Cul said to Jarm, "Take him an' go home. We don' want no killer dawgs round here. You get shet of him, Jarm!"

A grin tickled Jarm's mouth and he began to laugh right in his cousins' angry faces. "I tol' you!" he exulted. "Don' say I ain' warn' you. I tol' you he was too much dawg for you!"

But the brothers stayed grim. "Take him an' go home," Cul repeated. "We'll settle this business tomorrow."

NEXT morning Jarm was astir at sunup, for this was Saturday, the day the Potter clan went early to the little town of Comfort Rock, passing along the wagon path on the bank of the Deep Dark River. When he heard the wagons coming he was ready, his loaded rifle just inside the door.

"Don' worry," he told the white fellow, who was sitting quietly beside the fire, "I ain' gonna let 'em run you off."

Jarm was standing in his doorway when the Potters pulled up in front and stopped. They made quite a company in their two mule-drawn rigs, Cul and Gert with their three half-grown boys; Ran and his pretty young wife, Merlie, holding Guthrie, her two-year-old, on her lap. In the second wagon were Fairfax and his sweetie, Liz, and Ran's girl twins, aged five.

Under the wagons, keeping quiet and looking mighty sick and chawed-up were Whizzer and Old Brown, and seeing them so, Jarm grinned.

The women called "Howdy, Jarm," but the men were silent, and nothing more was said till all had piled out into the road.

"Now, Jarm," Cul asked, "you gonna get shet o' that dawg?"

Jarm had been thinking and had his words ready. "Don' know as I need, Cul. You won't gainsay you put upon me long. Now the thing's t'other, an' I reckon I got my rights."

"That's what I tol' 'em, Jarm," Gert put in. "Le's see this here dawg."

"Hush now, Gert!" Cul said sharply, but Jarm snapped his fingers and the white fellow came from the cabin. Whizzer and Old Brown growled, but slunk safe under the wagons, and Jarm grinned again.

"That little feller licked Whizzer and Old Brown?" Gert cried shrilly, and at this the men set up a defensive clamor, how he was a devil dog, a hellion, how he—

They didn't hear the splash but all heard Merlie scream. And when they wheeled there was two-year-old Guthrie flopping around in the water. Small Guthrie, unattended for a moment, had tumbled off the bank into the Deep Dark, and already the slow sliding current had carried him out of reach in the smooth fast-moving water.

The moment was unreal, as tragedy always is until it culminates, and the Potter men stood helplessly on the bank, their faces sickly white, shouting gibberish. The women wailed and screamed, the children bawled, and Whizzer and Old Brown came out from the wagons to gallop aimlessly and add their voices to the din. Guthrie went down once, came up blubbering and floated on, thrashing out with puny arms and legs while time stood still—for not one of these hill men could

swim a stroke, and the Deep Dark drops off its banks at thirteen feet or more and deepens out from there.

Ran, gray and drawn, was sitting on the bank tugging at his worn work shoes when the dog flashed past. There was a splash and the white fellow was in the river, his arching neck cutting the water strongly as he swam toward the drowning child.

The Potter clan held its breath, watching.

The dog reached Guthrie as the infant rose sluggishly the second time, seized the back of his jacket in his teeth and, holding him so, turned and began the long trip in.

All could see the effort it was, the dog straining to keep the baby's head high, the fight against the current of the Deep Dark, slow torturing work.

He made it, though. Jarm grabbed the baby, holding him head down to run the water out, and Cul helped the dog to scramble up the bank. Then Merlie took young Guthrie to her arms and all crowded round fearfully, but soon he got his voice back, yelling bloody murder, and they knew he'd be all right.

When they began to think of the white fellow he wasn't there; and at last they noted in astonishment that he was trotting up the road away from Comfort Rock—the wagon path that led to the great highway five miles away, across the mountains.

"Hey, where's he goin'?" Cul yelled. "Call him back, Jarm."

"I'll try," Jarm answered, "but I don' s'pect he'll come." He whistled shrilly, and when the fellow stopped, he called, "Y'ere boy, y'ere boy!" The dog regarded them appraisingly, then turned and trotted on.

"What's amatter with him?" Ran wondered fretfully.

It was Merlie who answered. Clutching the sobbing, sopping Guthrie to her breast, she said acidly, "He's quality, that's what! Don' you see? He's real breed. We ain' fitten for the likes of him!" Strangely, she began to sob.

The words silenced them and they stood at gaze in the warm sunshine as the dog moved away. At the far rise he halted briefly, glanced back and passed from sight.

Ran scraped a shoe in the red dust and his voice was mild and diffident. "We goin' t' Comfort Rock for the day, Jarm. You care t'come along?"

Jarm searched the faces of his cousins, and for the first time he could remember found no malice there. A smile formed in his heart, welled up and tipped his lips.

"Reckon I do," he answered gravely. "Right kind of you to ask."

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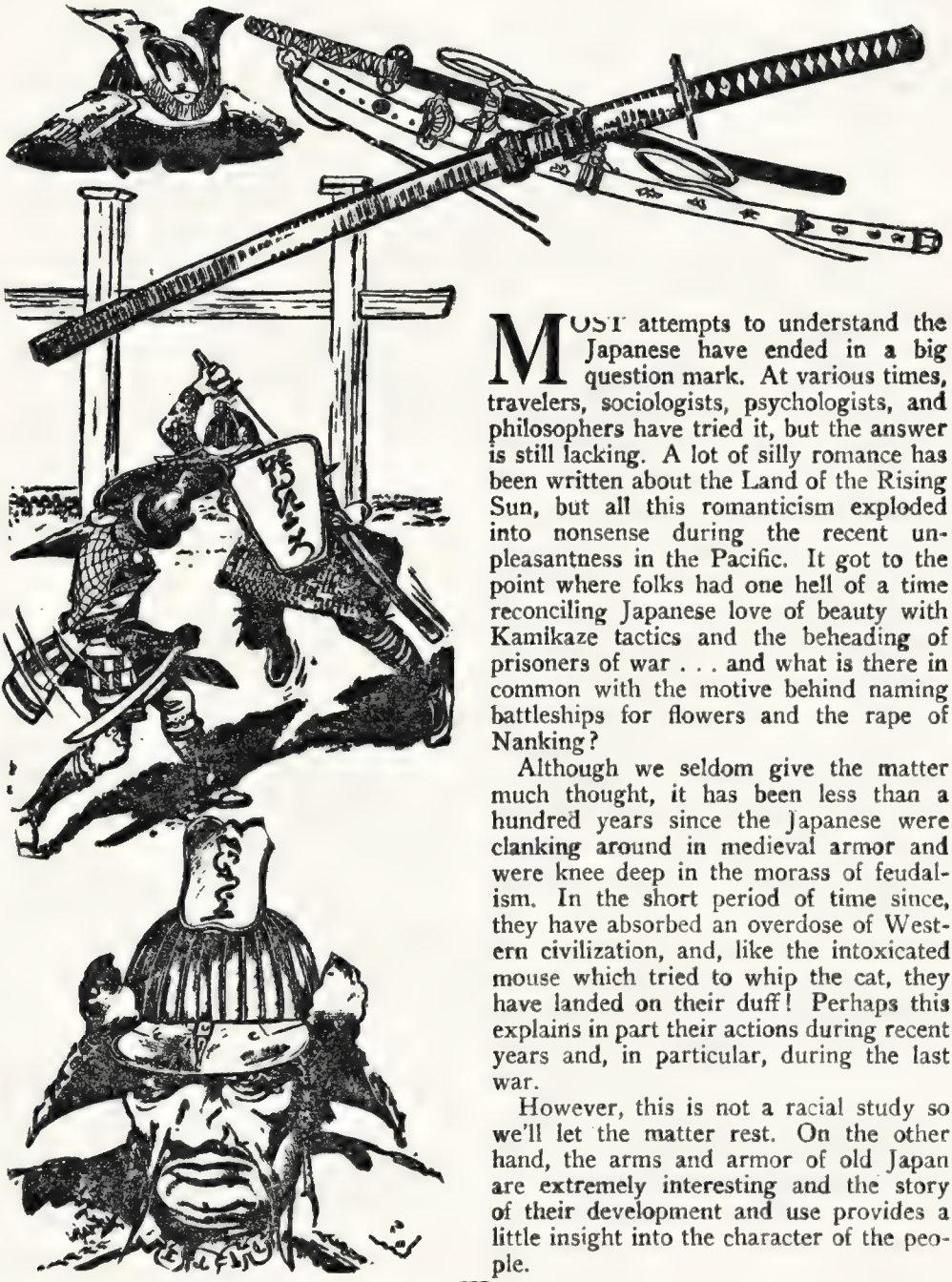
A FACT STORY By ROBERT H. RANKIN



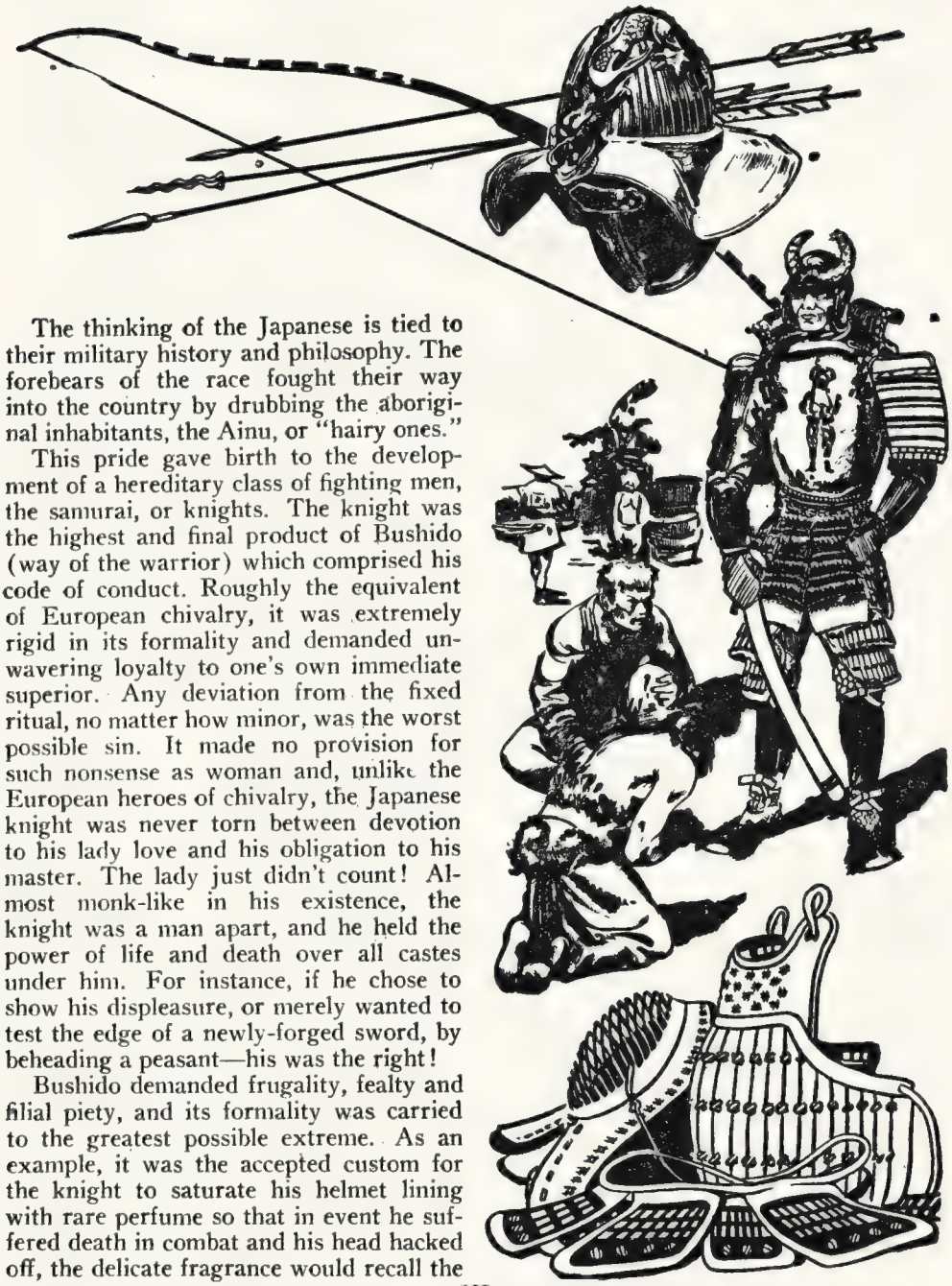
MOST attempts to understand the Japanese have ended in a big question mark. At various times, travelers, sociologists, psychologists, and philosophers have tried it, but the answer is still lacking. A lot of silly romance has been written about the Land of the Rising Sun, but all this romanticism exploded into nonsense during the recent unpleasantness in the Pacific. It got to the point where folks had one hell of a time reconciling Japanese love of beauty with Kamikaze tactics and the beheading of prisoners of war . . . and what is there in common with the motive behind naming battleships for flowers and the rape of Nanking?

Although we seldom give the matter much thought, it has been less than a hundred years since the Japanese were clanking around in medieval armor and were knee deep in the morass of feudalism. In the short period of time since, they have absorbed an overdose of Western civilization, and, like the intoxicated mouse which tried to whip the cat, they have landed on their duff! Perhaps this explains in part their actions during recent years and, in particular, during the last war.

However, this is not a racial study so we'll let the matter rest. On the other hand, the arms and armor of old Japan are extremely interesting and the story of their development and use provides a little insight into the character of the people.

THE SAMURAI

DECORATIONS BY ROGER L. THOMAS



The thinking of the Japanese is tied to their military history and philosophy. The forebears of the race fought their way into the country by drubbing the aboriginal inhabitants, the Ainu, or "hairy ones."

This pride gave birth to the development of a hereditary class of fighting men, the samurai, or knights. The knight was the highest and final product of Bushido (way of the warrior) which comprised his code of conduct. Roughly the equivalent of European chivalry, it was extremely rigid in its formality and demanded unwavering loyalty to one's own immediate superior. Any deviation from the fixed ritual, no matter how minor, was the worst possible sin. It made no provision for such nonsense as woman and, unlike the European heroes of chivalry, the Japanese knight was never torn between devotion to his lady love and his obligation to his master. The lady just didn't count! Almost monk-like in his existence, the knight was a man apart, and he held the power of life and death over all castes under him. For instance, if he chose to show his displeasure, or merely wanted to test the edge of a newly-forged sword, by beheading a peasant—his was the right!

Bushido demanded frugality, fealty and filial piety, and its formality was carried to the greatest possible extreme. As an example, it was the accepted custom for the knight to saturate his helmet lining with rare perfume so that in event he suffered death in combat and his head hacked off, the delicate fragrance would recall the

elegance of his life and bear witness to his gentlemanly rank and station even amidst the stench of his bloody demise. And, unlike in Europe, where losing a passage at arms might result in capture and ransom, defeat in old Japan meant also losing one's head!

In order to get into the spirit of things, campaigns were usually opened by a human sacrifice to the god of war, the unhappy victim being a prisoner or a condemned criminal. And formality demanded that the aggressor politely loosen a whistling arrow to announce that an attack was about to be launched.

Tactics, as such, were crude. Ambushes were sometimes employed, but pitched battles were the usual order of things. Above all, individual displays of prowess were the chief object in battle—an idea resulting no doubt from the nature of the weapons used and the immense labor called upon to be proficient in their use. In fact, up until about the 15th Century, battles resembled nothing quite so much as an overgrown fencing match. The champions of one side would proceed to a cleared space between the contesting armies and challenge its best fighters to taste the honor of individual combat. In these instances, the issue of the day might be decided without the armies ever engaging in mass combat.

IN SUCH individual contests the knight would face the enemy army, recite his name and lineage, his honors in combat, and his master's identity and wealth. Then he issued his challenge to any warrior of equal rank and fame to do battle. The worthy accepting the challenge would then come forward and make the same recital. Thereupon both would heap personal insults upon the other as a preliminary to the actual fighting.

These combats were usually decided by the best swordsman, but victory might prove to be rather sour, for, although the code demanded that the contestants be left strictly alone during their fight, the victor was required to stand off the combined assault of his victim's comrades and retainers if they decided to make an issue of the matter.

After the fighting was over, the knight stuck a small knifelike skewer, bearing his identifying crest, in the head of his victim to stake out his claim until he had an opportunity to cut off the head. When the day's battle came to a close, this skewer was stuck in the ear hole of the severed head and used as a handle to carry the bloody trophy to the commander-in-chief for identification and credit. The rules about this sort of thing were very strict . . . no head, no credit!

From a tactical point of view, this method of fighting was pretty sorry, as the Japanese quickly learned during the Mongol invasion in 1274. The barbarian invaders used a phalanx formation. Mass tactics thoroughly routed the Japanese and painfully demonstrated the necessity of disciplined action and the complete subordination of the individual warrior to the unit as a whole.

Throughout its development, Japanese armor was as distinct from that used by the Europeans as East is from West. Generally speaking, European armor took its shape from the human body and the wearer appeared to be clad in a suit of metal clothes. In fact, clothing styles were often imitated in armor and actually influenced its design. The samurai, on the other hand, appeared to be wearing protective curtains; the warrior's armor was suspended from his body instead of being fitted to it. The loose-fitting harness was provided with wide shoulder protectors, pyramidal skirts, swelling corselet and broad neck defenses.

This complexity of iron scales and plates, leather splints and chain mail, was all held together with an intricate arrangement of leather laces and silk cords. Lacquer, first used to resist rust, was used as a means of distinctive decoration. It should be noted that this armor served as one of the most important expressions of the art of the land, and the veneration of the ancients for their handsomely caparisoned knights is well expressed in the old Japanese saying, "The flower is the cherry blossom, the knight is the man."

Helmets were often works of art themselves. Built up of radial plates and highly ornamented, they were sometimes fitted with large antlers, symbolizing the stag's leadership and combativeness. An opening was provided in the apex and was held

to be the most sacred part of the entire armor for it was believed to be the dwelling place of Hackiman, the god of war, who accompanied his servitors into battle. Helmet design varied considerably. One notable example took the form of a catfish standing on its chest.

The most important weapon used by the samurai was the sword. The single-edged blade was most interesting for its three exactly similar curves, i.e., edge, face line, back.

It had an almost imperceptible convexed blade, combined with admirable tempering, and its cunning distribution of weight gave it a maximum of efficiency on the stroke.

A long blade was most often used in combat, with a companion shorter blade being reserved for use as a supplemental weapon and for hara-kiri. A small dagger-like edition was also carried for beheading defeated enemies. A small throwing knife was popular, too, and many of the knights were quite adept at flipping it through the eye holes of the iron mask sometimes worn over the face.

The steel used in these samurai blades was no doubt the best ever tempered, not excepting Damascus and Toledo blades. Each swordsmith had his own particular secret and the blades have never been duplicated in modern times. These blades were fashioned of alternating layers of wrought and white iron, folded over each other again and again to form an intricate pattern.

The formed glowing blade was then plunged into heated water, the exact temperature of which was kept a closely guarded secret. Kamakura, perhaps the greatest of all Japanese swordsmiths, tested the temperature of the water by plunging his own hand in up to the wrist. It is related that an apprentice, hoping to learn the secret, plunged his hand into a water bath, whereupon the master seized a newly-forged blade and in one motion quickly severed the man's hand before he could withdraw it.

OTHER weapons were the bow, glaive and spear. The bow was made of unvarnished boxwood, zelkowa, and bamboo, strengthened with cord of rattan lashings. Arrow shafts were of cherry or bamboo and for precision flight were fitted with feathers, those of the eagle being most esteemed for the purpose. As bowmen, the samurai were perhaps unrivaled, even by the famed English longbowmen and the Turkish archers, but for some unknown reason they never developed the crossbow.

A few appeared from time to time, but they were distinctly Chinese in design and the Japanese never became skilled in their use.

The glaive had a scimitar-like blade, some three feet long, attached to a slightly longer shaft, and was used mostly by the early war-like monks.

The spear was used as an adjunct to the sword and was beautiful in both design and workmanship. The villainous single-edged blade was attached to a long pole of bamboo or cherry. Although the sword was an excellent weapon for troops in loose formation, the spear was better for the close order of fighting employed. While the Japanese became past-masters in the use of the spear, they never developed the variety of pole-arms which the Europeans did.

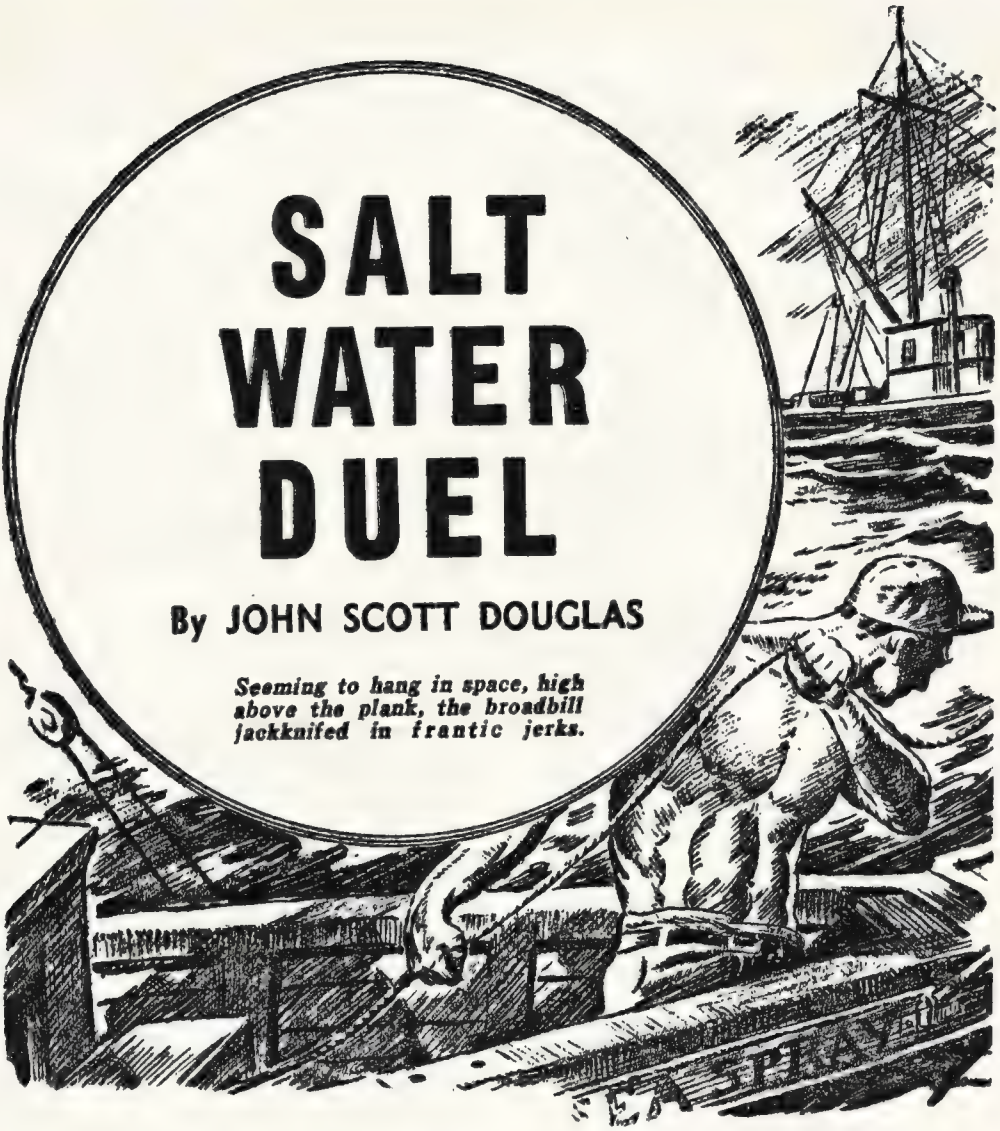
Feudalism came to an end in Japan in 1868, some hundreds of years after it did in Europe. The overthrow of Western feudalism was a gradual proces over a span of more than a century and allowed the many necessary changes to be made slowly and logically. In Japan, the advent of Commodore Perry threw the Japanese nation almost overnight from medieval times into the modern world. It was a shock to which the people never became completely adjusted.

With the end of feudalism in Japan, the samurai were forced into the obscurity of private life, never quite understanding just what had happened. Values had changed and the old honored ethics were no more. The inscriptions on coins became of more value than the delicate artistry lavished on arms and armor. Commerce and industry created a new kind of nobility.

Bushido was dead (although it took World War II to make the samurai finally realize they were done) and the beloved weapons and harness became nothing but museum pieces.

SALT WATER DUEL

By JOHN SCOTT DOUGLAS



Seeming to hang in space, high above the plank, the broadbill jackknifed in frantic jerks.

AXEL GUNNISON turned wide in the channel so that the 24-foot plank extending from his bow could glide between the oil dock and the little pier. He was the boat-operator, and from his station over the engine-cabin, he shouted down as the boat stopped beside the pier, good humor in his grizzled brown face. "How do they look, Mac?"

The two broadbill swordfish in the scuppers weighed about 230 pounds without insides, head, fins or tail, which meant they had been 400 pounds of fighting fury when Gunnison's harpooner had tagged them.

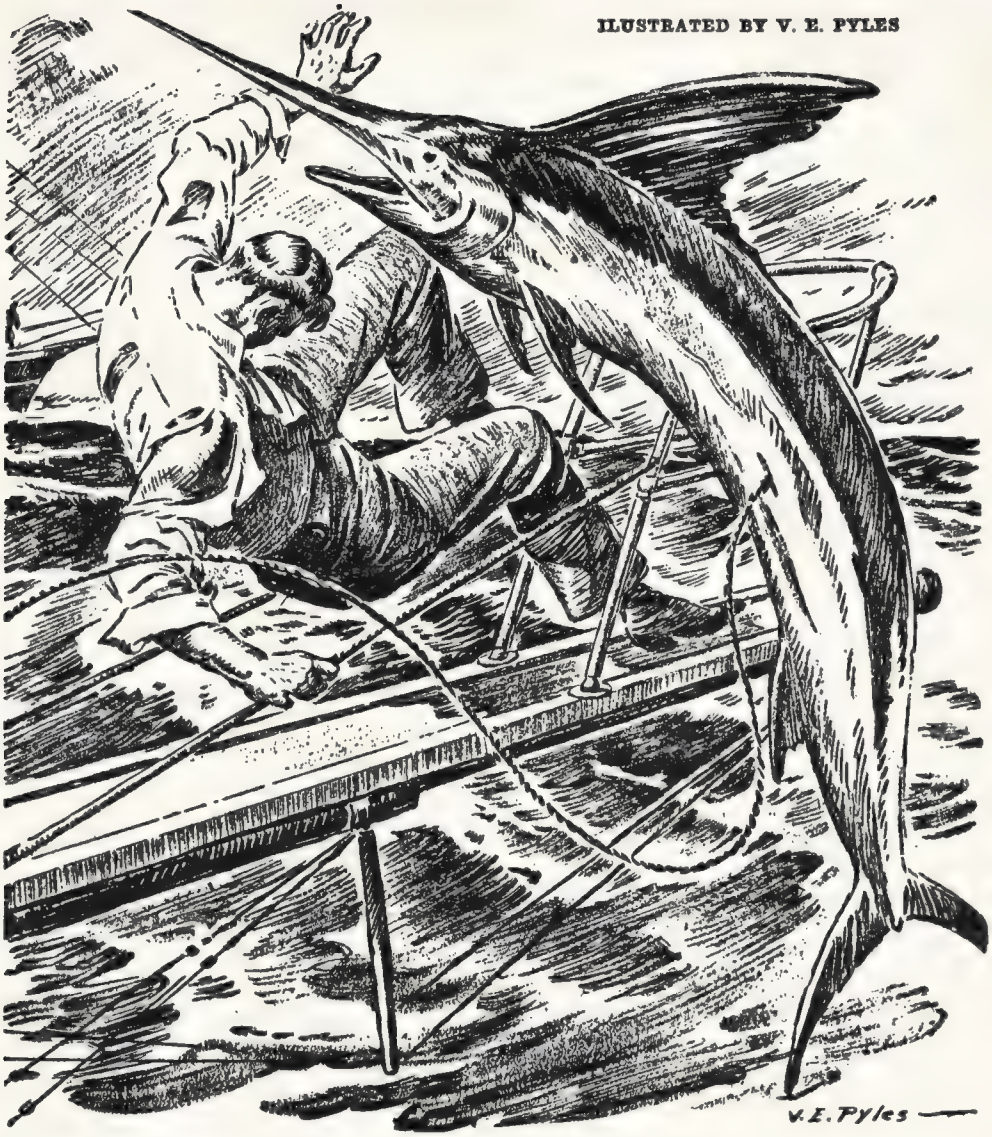
"They make me 'seasick' the way landlubbers get homesick," I said despondently. "It's two months since my last boat was wrecked on Catalina Island. I'm getting tired of the beach."

Gunnison descended to the deck and put a big foot on the rail.

"Heard of an opening, Mac." But his twinkling eyes told me he was joking. "Three other swordfishermen I offered it to weren't interested."

"Good boats don't have trouble getting men," I said suspiciously. "What's wrong with this one anyway—got a poor harpooner?"

ILUSTRATED BY V. E. PYLES



"No one could complain about Mitch Christy, Mac."

I shook my head. "He's probably the best young harpooner in Southern California. But my old woman wouldn't leave Newport Beach."

"You wouldn't have to move to Santa Barbara to fish with him. Christy's sailing out of Newport now."

I looked at Gunnison and saw that he was serious.

"What's the catch? A guy as good as he is doesn't ask twice to get a crew."

Gunnison spat at the water. "Not ordinarily. But he's telling it around that he's planning to be high man here. Humpy Hacker may have something to say about that."

"Plenty," I said. "The last three crews making that boast got so few broadbills, they had to get the hell out of here. When you're fishing on shares, there's no sense in being part of a crew that Hacker is laying for."

"That's what I don't get," Gunnison said thoughtfully. "Christy always struck me as a quiet, sensible young guy who wouldn't go fishing for trouble."

He'd impressed me that way, too, when I'd seen him at meetings of the Sword-

fishermen's Association. Not a big man but compactly built, he had a quiet decisiveness that suggested unusual competence, and something in his face told you he couldn't be pushed around. He didn't speak often at meetings of our cooperative, but when he did, he made sense. And not even Humpy Hacker's efforts to bellow him down caused him to lose his temper. At such times, however, Christy's wide mouth tightened and his firm chin stiffened—signs that would have warned a less thick-skinned man than Hacker.

"Don't want the job?" Gunnison asked with a grin.

"I have enough troubles," I said. "What I can't understand is why Christy would ask for the grief he's going to get."

"That stumps me, too," said Gunnison.

AFTER Gunnison and his crew had left with their fish, I remained on the pier, wondering what Christy's move meant. I had an idea that behind it were the troubles Hacker had caused our cooperative.

At the time we formed our association, broadbills brought thirty cents a pound dressed, which wasn't a lot when you consider that they are so scarce that the average boat can take only about a hundred a year. What made us mad was that housewives buying our catches a block from where we unloaded them paid about three times as much a pound as we received. Five cents of the spread went to the wholesaler, who lost poundage in the final cleaning and then had to cut up and distribute the fish. Christy and I and several others argued that the wholesaler couldn't operate on any lower margin and remain in business, and that it wasn't he who was giving us a beating.

However, Hacker had had a long feud with the local wholesaler, and every time we tried to speak, he'd bellow us down. He was a picturesque, hulking giant of a man, weighing probably 250 pounds. He had a black beard, streaked with gray, and brows like overhanging ledges that made his small, piercing blue eyes appear to be glowing from caverns. Many fishermen were either impressed or afraid of him, and as we had a voice vote—at his insistence—he usually got his way. In his rusty fog-horn tone, he'd shout, "I'm high man, and I know what I'm talking about. We'll stop dealing with one wholesaler, and assign one boat to each of a number of wholesalers—" So we did that, and with no wholesaler particularly interested in pushing swordfish, we were soon receiving just what we had before and having to deduct the distribution expenses besides. Most of Hacker's ideas worked out that way—paying off personal grudges, but leaving us worse off than before.

Christy must have moved to Newport Beach with the intention of taking more fish than Hacker in the latter's home waters. If he could, Hacker's prime argument, that he was the high man, would be gone. Others, however, had had the same idea. Hacker had found ways to prevent them from taking even normal catches.

Well, I wished Christy luck, but I wasn't going to take sides. It was a young fellow's fight. All I wanted was a chance to fish.

Scarcely had I made that decision when I heard the rattle of planks, and turned to see Hacker lumbering toward me like a great, clumsy bear.

"Been looking for you, Mac," he said gruffly. "You're trying to find a place in a crew and Christy's hunting for an experienced man."

"So I hear."

"You're not taking that place!" Hacker said harshly. "Christy's getting too big for his britches, and I'm taking care of him in my own way."

Now, fishermen are an independent lot, and nothing stirs us up more than someone telling us what we're going to do. I began to see that this wasn't only Christy's fight. It was mine as well—unless I was willing to take orders from a self-appointed leader.

"Hacker, I had no intention of taking that place—until now."

His heavy-featured face grew dark and his small, sharp eyes smoldered. "You're more of a fool than I thought, McKee!" And turning, he stalked away.

There was only one small pier where Christy might have found mooring privil-edges, and when I reached it early the next morning, he and an older, heavier

man were cleaning up the *Sea Spray*.

I stepped aboard and said, "I'm Adam McKee, Christy."

His hand felt like steel on mine. "I know, Mac. You're one of those who talk sense at our meetings. What can I do for you?"

Stowing my lunch sack on a hatch, I said, "When are we sailing?"

His smile faded but his eyes kindled with a friendly warmth.

"I'd expect that of you, Mac, but I'm not pulling a man your age into this fight."

"I gave you credit for better sense, Christy," I said crustily. "Who understands that battered old hulk Hacker better than I-"

Christy's mouth puckered slightly and he glanced at his crewmate—a plump man with a round and florid face, and eyes that had a pleasant glimmer. He wasn't the kind who seeks trouble, but he looked like a man whose loyalty couldn't be shaken. The fact that he hadn't deserted Christy after learning what he was up against proved that. Now he smiled and nodded.

"My hitch in the Navy taught me to value experience, Mac," Christy said. "Guess Bill Garland does, too."

He cast off, and Garland went up to the boat-operator's station and backed into the channel. As we sailed along the channel, lined on both sides by beautiful summer homes, Christy came aft and dropped on the hatch beside me.

"It's well to know your opponent, Mac. What can you tell me about Hacker?"

"To begin with," I said, "he ran away to sea as a boy, and learned to use a hand-harpoon under an old mossback whaling skipper who had a grudge against harpoon-guns. Of course, Hacker later learned to use a gun. In fact, it was his success in shooting the iron into humpbacks that earned him the name 'Humpy.' When northern whaling stations began closing, he came to Southern California and bought an albacore boat. He was always a lone wolf, and fished without a crew."

"Risky business. But how did he get into swordfishing?"

"Well, he saw sports fishermen taking marlin swordfish, which aren't worth much except as trophies. Broadbills—perhaps the most tender and delicious of the large fish—were being neglected because they would rarely take bait.

"That gave Hacker an idea. Why not harpoon them? He was one of the first fishermen to think of this, and his first efforts were like those of a one-man orchestra. He constructed a high seat and his wheel was on a long shaft so that he could be his own lookout. After closing in on a swordfish, he'd lash his wheel, and then try to dash forward and harpoon the broadbill before it veered away from his bow. Of course, he didn't take many that way. But swordfish became popular, and he received fancy prices for any he brought in.

"When other pioneer swordfishermen added planks extending out over the water, so they could drive in an iron before a swordfish swerved, Hacker did, too. He copied their planks, with the hand rails along the sides and the railed pulpit at the end, but his were longer. He was the first man to try a thirty-foot plank, and it nearly proved his finish one day when it broke. His back was wrenched, and there was no one to help him aboard. It was the last time he sailed without a lookout and a boat-operator."

"Hacker always looks too slow to be a harpooner," Christy observed.

"His reactions are slow," I conceded. "But there isn't a harpooner on any swordfishing boat with better coordination, or as great strength. Sometimes he drives his iron right through a broadbill; his darts never pull out. That's why he takes close to three hundred broadbills, year in and year out."

"I know," Christy said, with a wry smile. "The high man! But I was close behind him last year. Maybe this year—"

HE broke off abruptly as the black rock walls of the breakwater opened. Ahead lay the ocean, shimmering blue and silver in the white sunlight. Christy, who was his own lookout, swung up onto the engine-cabin and climbed quickly to the duck-seat projecting forward from the upper mast. Slipping on dark glasses to reduce glare, he scanned the sea, but for a long time without sighting anything.

The *Sea Spray* vibrated under the thrust of her propeller, pitching gently in the glassy swells, the water slapping her bow and hissing softly along her skin. The long plank rose and fell against the misty outline of Catalina Island, lying low in the dazzling sea.

"Port your helm, Bill," Christy called from aloft.

Garland spun the wheel until Christy called, "Steady—steady on!"

Another plank-boat was searching for swordfish farther south, and when we turned, it did likewise. Several minutes later, I saw that it had an I-shaped beam rather than the conventional wooden plank. Few boats used these steel girders because they had to be shorter and even then required heavy ballast aft to keep the bow from being unwieldly. Hacker needed such a beam, however, because his weight placed too great a strain on a wooden plank. The boat sailing diagonally toward our course was his, but I attached no importance to this for a while.

When Bill Garland could see two blue fins directly ahead, Christy descended and went out on the long, swaying plank. He untied the shackles that held the harpoon shaft to the pulpit rails, and when we were close enough for the rising plank to hide the boat-operator's view, he began directing Garland with the shaft.

The broadbill didn't try to evade us as we approached from behind. Its dorsal and caudal fins blazed blue as it rose on the swells, several hundred yards beyond our bow.

A flash to port caught my eye, and I turned to see Hacker heliographing with something bright to attract our attention. Though perhaps three hundred yards further from the fish than we were, he was waving us away.

I called softly, so that I wouldn't frighten the fish. "Hacker's claiming this broadbill, Christy. If he doesn't get it, neither will we."

Christy glanced momentarily at the other boat, and then began directing Garland again. When Hacker realized that we had no intention of abandoning the fish, he began shouting. His voice reverberated like a fog-horn, but the broadbill continued to ride the swells.

Looking back, I saw that Garland was ignoring the shouts. His pleasant expression was gone, and his lips were drawn into a white line.

Presently the broadbill was just beyond the plank, its sword parting the swells, which rolled back smoothly over its glistening body. Bracing himself, Christy raised his shaft, preparing for the thrust.

Suddenly there was a shrill whistle to port as Hacker's boat-operator blew his horn.

The startled fish plunged, its caudal fin lashing the water into a milky swirl of bubbles. Christy had to wait a split-second before the pulpit was over that boil, and by then the broadbill was perhaps fifteen feet down. A thrust of the shaft would obviously be futile. Instead, he hurled the harpoon, his whole body behind the throw.

The shaft vanished, then reappeared as he tugged violently on the hand-line. The off-set, arrow-shaped dart was no longer on the shaft. It was embedded in the broadbill. And attached to it was the harpoon-line.

Before I could pick up the line-box, which held the remainder of the harpoon-line, a blue and silver streak hissed past Christy as he worked aft on the plank. Seeming to hang in space, high above the plank, the broadbill jackknifed in frantic jerks, lights playing in brilliant flashes over its body.

Dropping with a splash, it lashed the water into spinning eddies, fighting with terror and fury to rid itself of the copper dart in its body. Failing in this, it ran, and line began rippling through the water and flopping from the line-box. A moment later the fish leapt clear, its sword fencing wildly. After it landed in a diamond shower of spray, line ripped swiftly downward, indicating that the fish was plunging toward the depths.

Christy sighed with relief. "Thought for a few seconds that it was going to ram us."

I picked up the line-box and worked it around the superstructure supports before lifting the coil from the box. As soon as the end was fast to the skiff. Christy helped me slide the small boat over the side. When the broadbill had tired itself out battling the drag of the skiff, it might be safe to pull up. But

you were never completely sure of that.

Since broadbills often travel in pairs, Christy climbed to the duck-seat again and so did Hacker's lookout. After over an hour of futile searching, I happened to look toward our skiff and then let out an outraged yell. Hacker's *Big Dipper* had run alongside, and at that moment Hacker himself jumped into the skiff and began heaving in line as his boat pulled away.

CHRISTY stared hard at Hacker for several seconds without saying anything, and then descended and stepped into the engine-cabin. He came out with a high-powered rifle.

"You can't shoot a man for stealing a fish!" I cried in alarm.

"Could happen," Christy said grimly.

He walked forward because Garland was turning toward our skiff. Uncertainly I followed, wondering whether I might be shot if I tried to wrench the gun from him.

"You have to use rough measures with rough customers," Garland called down, his voice so mild that it had a calming effect on me.

I decided to trust Christy. He appeared to be acting with more deliberation than anger as he propped a foot on the rail and took careful aim. With the boat rolling, however, even a warning shot might have disastrous results.

The rifle cracked, and splinters flew from the skiff's gunwale, bare inches from Hacker's knee. He dropped the line and whirled, his parted mouth a red cavern in his bearded face. Then he shook his fist, and roared wrathfully.

"You put an iron in *my* fish! Think you can get away with that?"

Christy drew a careful bead and spoke in a voice that was deadly quiet. "Hacker, I don't bluff. Touch that line again, and so help me, the next slug goes into your carcass."

"Just try it!" Hacker bellowed, reaching for the line.

Christy's body tensed as he braced himself against the roll caused by the beam sea. Hacker was watching. His huge paw dropped, and his face went purple with rage.

"You're holding the high cards now, Christy," he cried hoarsely. "But I'll be waiting for you to come ashore."

Christy shrugged and lowered the rifle. "Get this, Hacker. If you ever shout or blow your whistle again when I'm taking a fish, I'll leave the plank and start shooting. And that also goes for your crew."

Hacker could bring forth only a hoarse rumble when he tried to speak. Vaguely he gestured, and his boat chugged alongside the skiff to take him aboard.

We waited until the *Big Dipper* was well away before gliding up to the skiff. I jumped in. The *Sea Spray* immediately opened water because even an exhausted broadbill will sometimes drive its sword through a boat's hull. But this one was sluggish with fatigue. It rolled and turned in short dashes after I'd brought it into view by heaving up fathoms of line. Slowly I drew it toward the skiff with my left hand while I held the whalelance poised with the other. A quick thrust between the gills finished its struggles.

The boat returned, and with the winch Christy took aboard the fish and the skiff. Then we resumed our hunt.

Luckily Christy sighted the fins of another broadbill a short time later, and after we'd run it down, he placed a dart close to the spine. Leaving it to wear itself out against the skiff, we started searching for a mate. We found it a quarter-hour later, and Christy drove in the iron as it started to submerge. We left the line secured to a cluster of cork floats, with our flag marking them.

By then a cold wind ruffled the water, limiting visibility. It grew more brisk with advancing afternoon, keeping the warm-water swordfish down. With small chance of finding any broadbills on the surface, we took aboard out last two, and turned homeward.

Ordinarily, with three fish for the day, we'd have been in high spirits. But as we cleaned them on the afterdeck, Christy's face was thoughtful and he said little. After covering our dressed fish with wet cloths, I said, "We could land you at another pier, Christy."

He shook his head. "I didn't come here to duck a fight."

"Hacker came from a hard school, Chris. He's a dirty fighter."

He nodded, spread his sleeping bag on the hatch, crawled in, and was soon sleeping soundly. Staring at his relaxed face, I wondered how it would look that evening. I'd seen the faces of several men who had engaged in bar-room brawls with Humpy Hacker.

HACKER stood glowering at us as we worked up to the pier. As the boat creaked against its rope fenders, Christy put a foot on the rail and jumped for the pier.

"Watch out!" I shouted.

Hacker had lowered his shaggy head and was charging. He struck before one of Christy's feet even touched the planking. He was hurled backward over the rail, his head thumping the deck. And as he landed on his back, Hacker jumped, with the intention of planting both feet in the younger harpooner's stomach.

Though dazed, Christy saw him coming and rolled fast, so that Hacker's feet thudded the decking. The failure disconcerted him only momentarily. He kicked at Christy's chest, and though my crewmate rolled swiftly, the heavy boot grazed his ribs.

While the bigger man was recovering, Christy tried to reach his feet. Before he could straighten up, Hacker was upon him, his huge fist swinging.

Christy attempted to roll with the punch, but he wasn't in position to move fast enough. He took part of the force of the blow on the side of the jaw and reeled backward to fetch up against the low rail. He went over backward, raising a plume of water.

As he struck out for the pier ladder, Hacker seized the oar from the skiff and jumped to the pier. Garland was still descending the ladder and couldn't interfere. But I sprang after him as he ran to meet Christy when he reached the top of the ladder.

Hacker brought back the oar the moment Christy's blond head appeared. I grabbed the oar and heaved hard. Hacker, as I had hoped, had a firm grip, and my unexpected pull toppled him over on his back. I twisted the oar from his hands and sent it spinning to Garland.

Christy finished climbing while Hacker scrambled to his feet. He was pinched into a corner, however, by the guard blocks on either side and the water behind. It was not an advantage Hacker was willing to lose. He lowered his head and rushed, his big fists clenched for punishing blows.

What happened then took both Hacker and me by surprise. Christy sprang at the last moment to the guard block and, from that precarious footing, drove a violent right to the side of Hacker's heavy jaw. It was the big ex-whaleman who was almost hurled from the pier.

Yet somehow he recovered his balance and swung around. Kicking at the guard block, he tried to get out of that bad corner. He walked into a left coming with terrific force for his stomach, and before he could cover up, Christy buried his right in the same place. Hacker groaned and tried to clinch so that he could use his knees and feet. Two more blows to his midsection changed his mind about that.

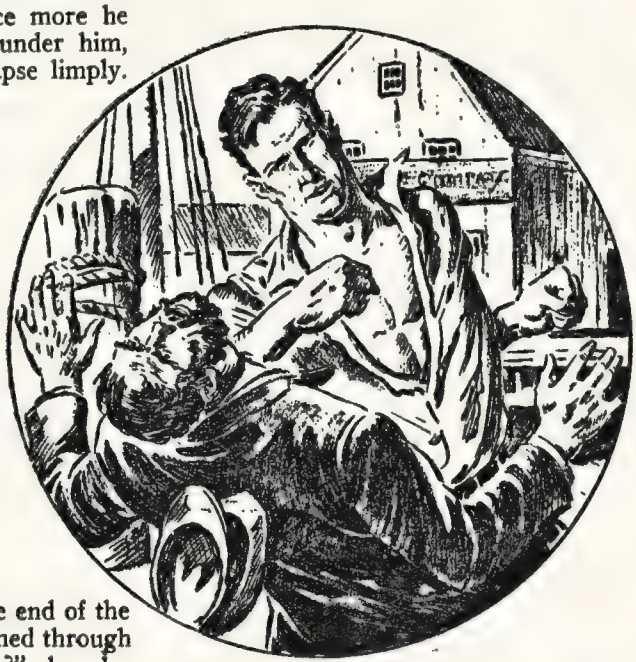
Christy braced himself as Hacker prepared to charge. Blood trickled from the corners of his mouth because of the blow he'd received on the boat. But his face was coldly determined, in sharp contrast to the mottled anger in Hacker's. Giving Hacker no chance to get into motion, he stepped in fast, his left to the side of the jaw rocking the bigger man. He ducked a haymaker, and came through the opened guard with a right that smashed squarely on Hacker's nose. There was a spurt of blood, a crunch of cartilage. Hacker's nose was a red and flattened pulp.

Despite the blood streaming down his face and into his beard, however, his only admission of pain was a stiffled moan. Far from beaten, he knew that if he could ever wrap his powerful arms around Christy that the fight was his. With his superior weight, he could bear Christy to the planking and fight his own way.

Christy avoided this by side-stepping and ducking, by weaving away from Hacker's well-aimed blows, and by riding the punches he couldn't avoid. And he always darted in swiftly, his fists pounding Hacker's stomach to bring his guard down, so that he could cut and jab and mash the big man's chin and face. But he failed to back-track quickly enough from one blow. Hacker's fist raked four red grooves along the side of his jaw.

Undoubtedly it jarred Christy, but not as much as Hacker thought. When the big fellow tried to crush Christy in his arms, my crewmate forced him back with a short, vicious jab to the short-ribs, following it with an uppercut that had the whole drive of his body behind it. The way that big, shaggy head snapped back, I thought Hacker's neck was broken.

He dropped like a sack of cement, Then, as if dazed, he crawled painfully to his knees and tried to rise. Instead, he stretched out full length on the planking. Yet with great effort, he pushed himself slowly to all fours and stared with hatred through his swollen eye-lids, his breath coming in shaken gasps. Once more he attempted to gather his feet under him, only to sag forward and collapse limply.



The way that big, shaggy head snapped back, I thought Hacker's neck was broken.

A crowd had collected at the end of the pier, and now a policeman pushed through it. "Here—what's going on?" he demanded.

Christy stared bleakly at the officer. "We had words," he explained, with vast understatement.

NOW, knocking a man like Hacker senseless accomplishes little. He must be beaten at his own game, and Christy was smart enough to realize that. He set out to make ours the high boat. And Hacker, as soon as his broken nose had set sufficiently so that he could fish again, sought to defend his position. Christy was ahead fifty-eight to fifty, however, by the time our co-op held its next meeting.

Christy rose when the meeting was called to order, and said crisply, "I want to make a motion, not because I'm the high man, but because I believe it may benefit us all."

Fishermen roared with laughter when he looked around to see if anyone questioned his claim. Hacker's face was congested, and he squirmed. He had nothing to say that evening.

Before another meeting was called, Hacker had several spectacular days which put him several fish ahead of us. This time he rose and bellowed, "Now, as high man, I'm telling you—"

Christy whispered audibly, "What has that to do with it?"

Guffaws drowned out Hacker; he started again: "As high man—" Men stomped and cheered until the chairman restored order. Hacker fidgeted, growing more and more flushed, and then, unable to think of what he had to say, he stalked from the hall.

So keen became interest in the rivalry between Christy and Hacker that the plants handling our catches posted slates with the fish each had taken that day and their season's totals. The totals steadily climbed, yet neither man could stay ahead

of the other for many days running. It looked as if both would end the year with better than 300 broadbills.

One day, when our boat had reached half of that total, we had left one broadbill to fight the skiff's drag and Christy had then planted an iron in its mate. He came aft as I secured the harpoon-line to a set of floats. The broadbill was running fast and we had to get the floats overboard before the line was snatched away. Maybe haste was responsible for whot happened.

We picked up the floats and the can of cement made fast to them, which would remain bottom-down and thus hold our distinctive flag upright in the water. Together, we heaved overboard the floats, the cement sinker, and the flag. And then, as if an invisible hand had grasped him, Christy was catapulted over the rail.

For a stunned moment I was too astonished to realize there must have been a loop in the line. Apparently he had one foot in the center of the loop. The line had tightened around his ankle and the can of cement had whipped him over the rail. The cement sinker pulled him under a rolling swell, but he was brought up, several yards from the boat, by the cork floats.

As bad luck would have it, the broadbill had already taken most of the line, and now it began towing Christy out to sea. Troubles never seem to come singly. Garland had scarcely turned toward our crewmate when the engine stopped. He cursed bitterly as he dropped down the ladder and dived into the engine-cabin. I ran forward to keep Christy in sight.

Seeing another plank-boat off to port, I picked up a marker flag on a bamboo staff and began to wigwag. The other boat gave no sign it saw me, so I ran out onto the plank to the pulpit. The boat turned toward us, its I-beam and rigging identifying it as Hacker's.

The broadbill had stopped running, and now tried to rid itself of the drag by sounding. The floats, the flag and Christy disappeared. My heart stood still as I waited. Many seconds later, the buoyant floats brought up Christy, having checked the broadbill's dive. Christy attempted to free his ankle. Before he could do so, he was once more pulled down. The chances were that the swordfish would soon come up to discover what was restraining it. Then it might drive its sword through Christy.

Desperately I waved my flag and pointed at him as he appeared, looking half-drowned. Hacker had ignored our boat since our fight with Christy, yet I couldn't believe he would refuse help at a time like this. Hard-shelled and unforgiving man that he was, that was exactly what he did!

The *Big Dipper* crossed our bow, so close I could have thrown a harpoon on her deck. The lookout and the boat-operator looked straight ahead, and Hacker pretended to be asleep on the after-hatch. I say pretended because he couldn't possibly have slept through my shouting. A sick sensation of rage and helplessness washed through me as the *Big Dipper* glided northward. No other boat was near enough to see my signals.

Christy had been pulled down four times, and he appeared so exhausted that I expected him at any moment to lose his hold on the floats and sink from sight. Before that happened, the engine throbbed. Garland sprang from the cabin, his face smeared with grease. He was still using forceful language as he scrambled up the ladder and turned the boat toward the floats.

He went along the weather side so that the boat wouldn't drift down on Christy. Then, after shifting into neutral, he came down to help me with the boat-hook. We dragged the floats up enough to grasp Christy's clammy hand. Luckily, the broadbill didn't pull just then, so we disentangled his ankle and dropped the floats back. We forced water out of him with first-aid measures, tucked him into a sleeping bag, and headed for Newport and a doctor. The two broadbills could be recovered later...and they were.

Christy was able to walk ashore, and he refused to see a doctor. Four days passed, however, before he was steady enough on his feet to go out again to the pulpit. During that time, Hacker once more became the high man.

I THOUGHT Christy might give Hacker another beating for his callous refusal of help. Apparently, however, he thought a blow to the big man's pride

would hurt worse than physical punishment. We went out in all sorts of weather, and the few fish we took on bad days kept out total climbing. On the good days, we fished long hours. Rarely did we return without a broadbill, and not infrequently we came in with two or more. Despite Hacker's hardest efforts, we stayed well ahead of him.

With his supremacy threatened, Hacker also went out in heavy seas. His boat, never designed for such treatment, pitched wildly in the big rollers, and the strain on the beam was increased when he was in the pulpit. The head-stay supporting the girder from the mast was then taut to the snapping point. The mast swayed with every plunge of the boat.

"He'll bring that stick down on his thick skull," Garland predicted one day during a blow, when Hacker was out in the pulpit.

But that wasn't what happened.

It happened on a day when the wind was piping and the seas were frosted with spindrift. For hours we'd searched in vain for a swordfish, while Hacker's boat, the only other one out that day, did likewise.

We were turning home when Christy called from aloft.

"There are two dots to starboard. There, steady—steady as she goes, Bill." He added after a pause, "Probably a hammerhead shark or a couple of birds."

His jubilant cry, a short time later, told us that he's sighted a broadbill which had remained on the surface despite the chill wind.

We closed water. But when Christy went out on the plank, the head-stay creaked and the mast swayed dangerously. He looked upward and then, deliberately, he walked aft.

"I'm not that greedy," he said in explanation. "A broadbill isn't worth the price of another mast. Let's go home, Bill.

As we pitched and rolled in our turn, another plank-boat drew up from astern and passed us. Hacker apparently intended to show us who was the most daring harpooner. Garland whipped the wheel back and started to follow, to see whether he could take the fish.

Presently Hacker went out on the girder. The mast swayed with every plunge of the boat, but he ignored his perilous position, watching the two fins of the broadbill. The fish was on a frothing crest, its long sword in air, and then it fell from sight as the swell receded. The pulpit was over the spot, and the *Big Dipper's* bow was dropping away swiftly. Hacker thrust his harpoon violently downward, placing a terrible strain on the taut head-stay. It snapped with a *zing* that could be heard distinctly above the hissing seething and clapping of the seas.

Normally the steel girder would have sunk, but the thrust of the boat, traveling at full speed, turned it over and over, quickly entangling it in the side- and bob-stays and the broken strand of the head-stay. Imprisoned in this cage of wires, and barely able to keep his head above water, was Humpy Hacker! Even more serious became his position when his boat-operator stopped the *Big Dipper*. The mass of wires and the girder settled, threatening to carry the old harpooner to the bottom if the stays pulled out.

Still worse, Hacker had no chance to jerk back the hand-line, so that it held the broadbill on a short tether to the pulpit rail. The fish was trying to leap, being brought back short each time by the line. If it took a notion to attack Hacker, he would die a more painful death than if the girder dragged him to the depths.

His men, having ignored our appeal for help earlier, expected none from us. They didn't even wave or signal; instead, they stared helplessly at the tangle of wires. If one man lowered the other over the side in an attempt to free their harpooner, he rather than Hacker might become the target of the broadbill's attack.

For several moments none of us could speak. Then Christy roared, "Head for their bow, Bill. If I can put an iron in the fish—"

"Are you crazy?" Garland shouted. "If our plank breaks—"

"Full speed ahead!" Christy ordered, as if he hadn't heard.

"You owe Hacker nothing!" I cried, seizing his arm.

He glanced at me, his jaw hardening. "No—not a single thing!" And jerking

away, he started along the bobbing plank.

The mast creaked, the head-stay twanged with strain as we plunged toward the *Big Dipper*. The pulpit, falling away in wild swoops, almost dropped into the sea. Yet Christy stood poised, the freed shaft in his right hand, his eyes on the struggling fish.

The pulpit was practically over it bebefore he thrust downward, his supple body and arms bearing hard on the shaft. An explosive turmoil shattered the water. Christy grasped the hand-line, jerking the shaft free, and leaving only the copper-dart, with the harpoon-line secured to it, in the fish.

"Make the line fast to our towing bitt—as short as you can!" he screamed at me as he moved along the swaying plank.

I DID as he ordered. And Garland, understanding exactly what to do, turned rapidly to draw the fish as far as possible from the other boat. Christy pounded past me, returning in a moment with the rifle. Stretched between two lines, the broadbill could neither swerve nor sound. Christy's second shot ended its struggles.

Then he cut our harpoon-line, although I thought we might have some rights in the fish.

Cupping his hands, he shouted at the paralyzed crew of the *Big Dipper*. "One of you lower the other on a line, and put a wire rope around the plank. Quick now!"

They didn't understand what he had in mind, but they were grateful for any idea. The boat-operator, who was the heaviest, braced the line while the lookout slipped a wire rope around the I-beam. After he was aboard again, we chugged alongside, and Christy cast a light line to the other crew, ordering them to make it fast to the wire.

With the light line, we heaved the wire rope aboard at our stern. I was beginning to catch up with Christy now. I started the winch, and lowered the hook so that he could secure the wire to it. He hoisted the beam from the sea, allowing Hacker to draw some gasping breaths. We couldn't bring the steel plank aboard until the other crew had cut all the stays with a torch. It was hard work in such seas.

After we'd swung the beam, the stays, Hacker and the broadbill to our afterdeck, I wasn't too gentle forcing the water out of Hacker. By then Christy had some scalding coffee ready, and we made him drink the near-boiling brew before rolling him in a sleeping bag.

Hacker coughed, and then said gruffly, "Mighty white of you, Christy, saving my life. Especially after the way I treated you."

"Don't be a fool!" Christy snapped, his eyes cool. "As far as you personally are concerned, I'd gladly heave you an anchor any time you're drowning. However, that's beside the point. You're a swordfisherman, and we fishermen must learn to work together."

Leaving Hacker then, we went forward to drink our coffee in more pleasant surroundings.

When we were chugging down the Newport channel, we were joined by the most humble man I've ever seen.

"Christy," Hacker said, with only a show of his former bluster, "I've always been a lone-wolfer, but I figure a man's never too old to learn." He swallowed, and with difficulty continued: "As I see it, a good way to make a fresh beginning would be to—" He cleared his throat, and slowly raised his eyes. "Well, dammit, Christy, you know what I mean!"

He thrust out his hand as if uncertain whether Christy would take it. But Christy, grinning broadly, gripped it hard. "You're a tough old rooster, Hacker. I wouldn't be surprised if this isn't the hardest thing you ever did."

"That's no lie!" Hacker said, with strong feeling.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

IN ALL the grim history of man's inhumanity to man, there is perhaps no bloodier chapter than that written by the slave ships that plied their unsavory trade from the Guinea Coast to Europe and the New World from the 15th to the 19th centuries. . . . And such is the theme of Lucius Daniel's dramatic novelette which leads off this issue—the story of the tumultuous adventures of one Patrick Regan, gunner and sailorman, shanghaied aboard a fast "blackbirder" loaded with human cargo. Below, the author gives us a bit of background on "The Black Peacock"—

If any readers think that the *Black Peacock's* voyage is excessively bloody, they can look up the history of the *Malik Adhel*. She was originally a slaver on the Middle Passage—a fast Baltimore Clipper schooner. But not fast enough. She was captured by the British Navy, and after a term of service as a patrol vessel off the African coast was sold at auction. She was bought by an opium smuggling syndicate, and began to run between India and secret rendezvous on the China coast. This was one of the most dangerous routes in the world—poorly charted, full of reefs and shoals and racing currents, with fierce Malays waiting for the slightest misfortune to the vessel. Frequently an opium smuggler fought three actions in a single voyage, with Malay pirates and Chinese war-junks.

This was too tame for the crew of the *Malik Adhel*. They mutinied, killed their officers, and set up business as pirates. After a long and bloody career in the Indian Ocean and the China Sea they set sail for the West Indies, for reasons of health. They were captured off the coast of Cuba by an American naval vessel.

The Mexican War was on the horizon, and a group of far-sighted New York businessmen bought the *Malik Adhel* to smuggle arms through the American Navy for the use of the Mexican Army. Later she was sold to the Mexican government, but was soon captured by the American Navy.

The rest of her career is unknown. She was sold at auction once more—perhaps to enter the slave trade again, perhaps once more a pirate . . . they were common enough in the Caribbean and the Gulf in those days. One thing is sure, vessels of her type never found honest employment.

Incidentally, there *are* crocodiles in Florida. Before you write that scathing letter to *Adventure* look it up in the Britannica, or walk over to the nearest alligator farm and take a look around.

And Mr. Daniel goes on to tell us a bit about his own background—

I was born in Birmingham, Alabama, but before I reached my teens my family moved to Florida, and I've been living next to salt water ever since. My interest in sailing ships began in Pensacola when I was a kid, watching the red snapper schooners set sail for the Campeche banks. I can still remember how thrilled I was when the full-rigged ship *Danmark*, a training ship for the Danish Navy, anchored in Escambia Bay.

I read everything I could get my hands on that had to do with sailing vessels, and sailed on board every yacht I could talk into wanting another crew member. Naturally, when the war came, my interest in the sea led "them" to put me in the Infantry.

After two and a half years of European and American mud my liking for the nice, clean water was stronger than ever. I also picked up a strong dislike for hard work, and the easiest career I could think of was that of a free-lance writer. After three years of college the two ideas came together—the result is the voyage of the *Black Peacock*.

HAVE you read Browning Norton's story on page 94 yet? For our money, it's one of the most unusual dog stories we've ever read. That white dog has a personality all his own—and a dignity rarely found in the *two*-legged animal. As for the author, he says he has one little

problem that's pestered him all his life. It's one that a lot of us can sympathize with —that confusion about one's name that anybody with an unusual monicker runs into—

> At present, I am Sunday editor of The Youngstown, Ohio *Vindicator*. I came to the *Vindicator* on the copydesk where, with a jolly good group of kindred spirits on matters convivial, I worked three years before moving to my present job. Before that, and elsewhere, did sports, general assignment, the usual newspaper experience beats.
>
> You'll note that my story "Strange Guest" is signed *Browning* Norton—which brings up a complication that long has dogged me —my name. I am listed in *Editor & Publisher* as Frank R. Norton. I went through school days as Rowland, (Row . . . pronounced as the synonym for brawl) and I am now doing fiction as Browning Norton. I claim 'em all, for my parents quite unfeelingly had me christened Frank Rowland Browning Norton. Frank for an uncle, Rowland for a friend of my father, with the family name, Browning, stuck in for good measure. I was called Rowland, and as a youngster signed with a flourish, F. Rowland Norton. But I always had a sneaking feeling the thing was pretentious, and it finally dawned on me as well that the number of ways to misspell and mispronounce "Rowland" was as the Shmoos in Dogpatch. They gave it to me F. Roland, . . . F. Rolland . . . F. Ronald . . . Rollie, and so on to nausea. After I left home I began to sign Frank R. Norton and naturally people began to call me that. I've been Frank Norton ever since. It takes a pretty weird mentality to do anything remarkable to "Frank Norton."
>
> Recently, when I began to try fiction, I knew it was time for a change again. Just plain Frank wasn't nearly Fancy-Dan enough. Past experience assured me that "Rowland" would be mutilated one way or another, so I decided to give the long neglected Browning a workout. Other statistics: Graduate of Ohio Wesleyan. Married and have two children, Mary Browning, aged 7, and John Melvin, aged 6.

(No problem there, with Mary and John—eh, Mr. Norton?)

GATHERING dust in a million closets and attics all over America are souvenirs brought back by returning veterans of World War II. . . . Luger pistols, cameras and binoculars from the ETO, exotic doodads from North Africa and the Persian Gulf Command . . . while those fortunate (?) fellows who served in the Pacific area were likely to turn up with grass skirts, Japanese kimonos, Moro and Batangas knives—and samurai swords. Speaking of samurai swords, we have one ourself—or *thought* we did, until we read Bob Rankin's disillusioning remarks which follow. Now we have our doubts, despite the assurances as to the antiquity of that two-handed chopper, by the Nip officer from whom it was taken. But read what the author of "Weapons of the Samurai" (page 102) has to say—

> In connection with Japanese arms and armor, it is interesting to note that *very few* suits of authentic samurai harness ever got to this country (or ever got out of Japan), the notable exception being the armor in the Metropolitan Museum in New York.
>
> This armor was very expensive to make and skilled armorers were few. Even in the old feudal days, a single set of harness was valued as worth an entire province. The few suits which have been preserved are worth their weight in gold to collectors. The best examples of the armorer's art are part of the Japanese national treasury or have been deposited with famous shrines. The vast majority of Japanese armor seen in this country and in Europe is crude stuff, made strictly for the "tourist trade."
>
> Much the same thing is true of the famed samurai sword. The real article is damned scarce. There never were more than a mere handful of master swordsmiths. Their blades are just about priceless and they aren't to be found kicking around on the ordinary collector's market.
>
> Many so-called samurai swords were brought back from the Pacific War (and I see more and more of them decorating hock shop windows), but with one or two exceptions they are blades of comparatively recent manufacture. It is granted that they are interesting, are forged of good steel, and are pretty good examples of the swordmaker's art, *but they aren't samurai swords.* They may look alike, but that is about as far as it goes. There are some subtle characteristics, and certain proof marks which identify the true samurai blade. Proof marks of the old masters are known by very few folks in this country . . . and it takes more than a self-appointed "expert" to tell the difference. My advice to anyone who thinks he has the real article is to take it to the internationally recognized experts at either the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, D. C., or the Metropolitan Museum, in New York City, for honest evaluation.

RECENTLY we received an unusual and interesting dissertation on the subject of "Arctic Terms" from Dr. William A. Burns of the American Museum of Natural History. And since this issue

of *Adventure* goes on sale early in August—and most of us are sweating out the summer heat—this is a nice time to read about the land of ice and igloos. Dr. Burns writes as follows—

Arctic maneuvers of the American and Canadian armed forces are in the news more and more. Terms familiar to gold prospectors and Eskimos may be Greek to the citizen whose chilliest adventure is to rush out to the garage with a kettle of hot water for the radiator. Here are some Arctic terms you may find in tomorrow morning's newspaper:

Young ice: Ice so new that it is usually too weak to hold up a man's weight.

Old ice: Ice left over from last year, characterized by ridges and hummocks still fairly sharp.

Paleocrystic ice: Ice that is several or dozens of years old. Rain and thaws have rounded it so that it looks like prairie land.

Shore ice: Ice whose one edge is fast to the beach and the other meeting the pack. Sometimes shore ice is pushed far up the beach because of pressure from the pack.

The flaw: Where the shore ice edge meets the moving pack.

The pack: Ice of some thickness and extent, either in motion or thought of as being in motion.

Shore lead: When the pack moves away from the shore ice a lead appears as open water.

Field: A large mass of pack ice several miles in area.

Floe: Smaller than a field—acres instead of miles in area.

Cake: Smaller than a floe—Steinway-size.

Chunk: Smaller than a piano.

Mush or brash: Small chunks mixed with finely ground ice resulting from the pressure of the moving pack and the landfast shore ice.

Hole: An opening in sea ice that is square yards, square rods, or acres in extent.

Crack: A break you can jump across or even drive a dog team over.

Lane: Too wide to jump across but narrow enough to cross by using a cake of ice for a raft or for a temporary bridge.

Ship lane: A ship lane is wide enough to permit safe passage of a ship.

Lead: A crack wider than a lane. A lead may be dozens of yards to miles wide.

Pressure ice: Ridges or hummocks piled up by wind or current.

Hummock: Pressure ice piled into a small hill.

Ridge: A long hummock or series of hummocks of ice.

Glacier: A river of ice flowing slowly away from higher elevations through valleys and over ridges. Upon reaching the sea this ice breaks off and forms icebergs.

Icebergs: Large blocks of ice that have broken away from the edges of glaciers as they reach the sea. Many bergs are hundreds of feet thick and square miles in area.

Crevasse: A crack in land ice produced by unequal flowing motion. In sea ice it is called a crack or crevice.

Kayak: A small covered-over skin boat.

Umiak: A large open skin boat.

Tundra: Actually there are at least seven kinds of tundras; the stony tundra, the moss tundra, the lichen tundra, the dwarf-shrub tundra, the peat-moss tundra, the grassy tundra and the flowery tundra. Tundras occur where sufficient snow melts to permit the sun's rays to stimulate vegetation into active life. Six to eight weeks is about the limit of this type of growth.

Looming: The appearance of images, sometimes upside down, in the sky, a phenomenon somewhat similar to the mirage of hotter regions.

Northern lights: Although not confined to the Arctic and the sub-Arctic, they are most noticeable here. They appear as a white or tinted light, always changing in shape or in intensity. Forms may vary from luminous haze or bright darting shafts to shimmering curtain effects like old-fashioned ribbon Christmas candy.

A COUPLE of months back, we published in this column a letter from one of our readers concerning the advisability of this magazine's running stories about World War II. He didn't like 'em. That letter stirred up quite a bit of controversy. A good many communications on the subject have come to this office—some con but mainly pro—and some sort of on the fence, like the note received from William Raum who writes from Swarthmore, Pennsylvania to the effect that he just skips such yarns—"unless it's a humorous story." And from Sydney, Australia J. E. MacDonnell sends us a clipping from the Sydney *Sun*, which is offering £10 for brief accounts of personal war experiences by Aussie ex-servicemen. As the *Sun* says: "We know that in the war it wasn't the custom among fighting men to talk about their own experiences. 'Line-shooting' was frowned upon . . . But your story told today will help the trainee soldier, sailor and airman to understand much more clearly what war is all about, will prepare him better to meet what the future *might* hold in store for him." Well, frankly, we were thinking mainly of the entertainment value of such yarns—but maybe (Heaven forbid!) the *Sun* has something there too—K.W.G.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

LIGHTHOUSE Keeping.

Query:—I am anxious to obtain information on the U. S. Lighthouse Service. I am interested in the following: Age; physical, mental and educational requirements; pay; type of work; where and when to apply for duty as Lighthouse keeper or a worker on a Light Vessel.

—Pfc. Howard W. Cochran
Fort Benning, Georgia

Reply by Lieut. C. B. Lemon:—Some years ago the U. S. Coast Guard took over the operation, maintenance and manning of the Lighthouses, Light Vessels and other aids to Navigation which had up to that time been known as the Lighthouse service under the Dept. of Commerce. There is now *no* Lighthouse Service as such.

To be assigned to a Lighthouse or Light Vessel one must be serving in the U. S. Coast Guard; Officer, Warrant Officer, C.P.O. or other enlisted man.

To be eligible for enlistment in the Coast Guard one must be between the ages of 18 and 25. The physical, mental and educational requirements would be practically the same as those required of you on your enlistment in the Army. The pay, for enlisted men would be from $75 per month to $294 according to rating and length of service.

Assignments to duty at Lighthouses and aboard Light Vessels are made from general service as the occasion demands and in such ranks or ratings for which there is a need. Light Vessels require Radiomen, machinists, cooks, firemen, seamen etc.

Any Coast Guard enlisted man may request duty at Lighthouses and aboard Light Vessels and the chances are quite good for such duty assignments. Therefore, if you would like any duty at Lighthouses or on Light Vessels, it is necessary that you be a Coast Guardsman first.

A FEW facts for fishermen.

Query:—I am not too well versed in the ways of salt water fishing and would like some information on bottom fishing, surf casting—equipment and locations.

—Leo Porcianko
Jersey City, N. J.

Reply by C. Blackburn Miller:—Equipment for surf casting consists of a surf rod, consisting of two pieces, butt and tip. The latter preferably of split bamboo, should be 7 to 9 feet in length, depending on your height. The butt 18 inches in length. The reel should be of the simplest. It should be sturdy but without star drag, merely having a "throw-off" and a leather thumb brake. The line should be either of linen or stretched nylon and size 6 thread. Sinkers of pyramid or cone shape weighing from 3 ounces to 5 ounces. Swivels are necessary and leaders of twisted gut. I do not recommend wire leaders as they shine and fish can see them. Accompanying this should be a variety of hooks of different sizes from the small size for king fish to the large for striped bass. Success in taking this last species of fish is obtained by the use of different wooden plugs, especially those colored red and white and those which are tinted to resemble a bluefish or mullet.

Boat rods for bottom fishing are considerably shorter, rarely more than 5½ feet. The reel accompanying this is also simple but with heavier line from 12 to 18 thread. Wire leaders can be used as the water is generally deep and the fish do not seem to become alarmed at them. Here too swivels are necessary and a good assortment of hooks.

Surf fishing is good all along the New Jersey coat; it, of course, fluctuates according to the season. Numerous bottom fishing boats take parties every day, leaving from Sheepshead Bay Long Island and from the Manasquan Inlet at Brielle, N. J. They charge about $4.00 per day and supply the bait.

DOWN Under with the Aussies.

Query: During the war I was in the Merchant Marine and for quite some time ran on shuttle runs out of Australian ports to the islands north. While in Australia I developed a great liking, not only of your country, but of your people, their way of life, their philosophy and so on.

Now, after almost five years' absence, I would like to return. Not just for a visit, but to live and work. I am interested in finding out about job opportunities. I have had jobs aboard merchant ships, worked on a newspaper, and have had almost two years of college.

I will appreciate any information you can send me, and will be interested in your own personal opinion of my coming to Australia.

Lyman M. Nash
Tarkio, Missouri.

Reply by Alan Foley:—I am interested to learn that you were sufficiently impressed with Australia and its people, while you were here during the war years, to be thinking of making it your permanent habitat.

For securing general information your best plan will be to study some of the booklets issued by our Department of Information, as they will give you vastly more practical information than I could do within the compass of a letter. To aid you in this respect, I have sent you, under separate cover, the following booklets:

ARTISANS FOR AUSTRALIA
AUSTRALIANS OF TOMORROW.
AUSTRALIANS AND YOUR FUTURE.
KNOW AUSTRALIA
THIS—OR EXTINCTION?
AUSTRALIA IN FACTS AND FIGURES

In almost every industry in Australia today there is an acute shortage of labor; so don't think you would have any anxiety on employment grounds, should you decide to migrate here.

SOME comments on the ancient art of dowsing.

Query:—Don't laugh! Where can I purchase a set of the so-called Spanish Needles or divining rods? Saw a set do a surprising job a while back and would like to have one.

I understand a big strike was made in one of the abandoned mines in northern Georgia resulting from the use of one of these "sticks."

How rich a concentration of gold would be necessary in sand or gravel for one of the Fisher M-scopes to react to it? Are these machines of any use on coal?

What is the poorest run of gold to the cubic yard of sand and gravel that can be worked with a reasonable profit?

—Edwin T. Cooper
Ithaca, N. Y.

Reply by Victor Shaw:—Oh-no, I didn't "laugh" at your mention of a witch-stick, but I did snort, thinking that another good man has gone wrong. Useless to discuss this type of ancient necromancy, which has no basis at all in scientific fact, but I've never heard a witch stick called a "Spanish Needle." The Dip Needle is an authentic instrument, operating through *earth* magnetism and which has discovered a great many iron mines.

Also while I've seen all kinds of divining rods made of all kinds of wood, bound with red flannel, wrapped with copper wire, etc., etc., I never knew anyone made them commercially for sale. The original was always made with a fork from the hazel bush (witch hazel is so called for this reason) and you can make one yourself that is exactly as efficient as anything made to sell to the credulous. I mean, whatever you saw done was merely a coincidence. A happenstance.

Better make use of some of the modern geophysical instruments—of which the Fisher M-scope is one type (electro-magnetic), although it still has limits as to operating depths and for other reasons. It reacts, for example, to indicate any sub-surface change of rock formation, presence of a buried dike and so on including quartz veins which are the barren type having no mineralization whatever. In other words, you might be lucky, but also could be fooled by its indications. Have to dig anyway, to find out if you have a pay-vein—or nothing.

Sure, it would react crossing with it from a slate or limestone country rock to a coal bed. However, you *might* find that what was indicated was a passage from slate to granite. So, a knowledge of basic geology is best of all, because absolutely dependable.

I've known dredging operations that paid profits on gravels averaging 50c to 60c a cubic yard. Low costs and tonnage production.

POLICING the Big Ditch.

Query:—I am interested in the Canal Zone Police Force and would appreciate the following information: What are the physical and mental requirements? What is the rate of pay? Where do you make application at and how? Are they taking any enlistments now.

—Earl Z. Horner.
Marietta, Ohio

Reply by Francis H. Bent:—The last information I had regarding the Canal Zone Police was that:

"Policemen are not appointed in the United States, for duty with the Panama Canal on the Isthmus. All vacancies which occur in this position are filled by the selection of qualified persons who have been honorably discharged from their enlistment in the military or naval service on the Isthmus, this having been found to be the most satisfactory and economical method of making these appointments. The applicants available on the Isthmus are ample to fill any vancancies as they occur from time to time."

For full information concerning the Canal Zone Police you should write to Chief of Office, The Panama Canal, Wash., D.C.

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Fishing, Fresh water: *Fly and bait casting; bait casting outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing, Salt water: *Bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, c/o *Adventure.*

Fly and Bait Casting Tournaments—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Globetrotting and Vagabonding—NORMAN D. FORD, c/o *Adventure.*

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Horses and Horsemanship—JOHN RICHARD YOUNG, c/o *Adventure.*

Lost Treasure: *Tales of lost mines and treasure*—Raymond Dow, 15 Park Row, New York 7, N. Y.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling: *Regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, c/o *Adventure.*

Piracy and Buccaneering: *Exploits, plunders, lives and deaths of pirates in history and legend*—DR. CHARLES H. KNICKERBOCKER, 12 Mt. Desert St., Bar Harbor, Me.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *American and Foreign*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 3325 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *American and foreign; wing shooting and field trials; gunsmithing*—ROY S. TINNEY, Brielle, N. J.

Skiing—WILLIAM C. CLAPP, The Mountain Book Shop, North Conway, N. H.

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Songs of Campfire, Fo'c'sle and Bunkhouse—HARRY KIRBY MCCLINTOCK, 3911 So. Pacific Ave., San Pedro, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 2, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

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United States Coast Guard—LIEUT. C. B. LEMON, U.S.C.G., Ret., Box 221, Equinunk, Wayne Co., Penna.

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Royal Canadian Mounted Police—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure*.

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★Australia—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, 26 George St., Manly, N. S. W., Australia.

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Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

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(Continued from page 83)

she won't keep blaming you for having sort of made things tough for me, you can tell her this, too, which Forester can swear is the truth. I'm bad at heart, Lieutenant, and I planned to murder you! At first, I was going to do it openly; then Nick made me realize that I'd be tried and executed for it. Then, when I was alone, I started to figure out how I could get you, without being caught. I thought of an accident at the shooting range. I also thought of the fine chance I'd have if we were called out to fight. I don't know if I'd have actually done it, but I did think of it a lot.

"It's when you're like this," Peterschen's voice grew weak, "and likely to kick off, that you see how stupid it all is. All this love, all this jealousy, and hating a guy because he has the same taste as yourself!"

NIGHT had fallen completely and the first stars resembled glittering crystal against dark blue silk. The strong smell of boiling coffee, the smoke of camel-dung fires, drifted on the night wind. The calls of the sentries to each other punctuated the passing minutes.

"Cigarette?" Doberon asked.

Collin placed a cigarette in his mouth, held up a light. In the flame's light, Forester saw the officer's face, drawn and white, with an odd twist of self-derision at the corner of the lips.

"You're a man, Peterschen!" There was silence again, a long silence: "You're a man. And I'll try to be one. Somebody called me a coward not long ago and I sought to prove otherwise. This is harder to do. I thought of murder, too. But not openly, courageously, as you did. I was hoping the *bicos* would do the job. I gave them all the chance I could. And I am not sure that when I fired at you I did so accidentally. I knew that you couldn't fire for fear of hitting your friend, knew you wouldn't. And I knew I must not shoot—yet I did. Even I can't tell what passed through my mind in those seconds, when I was protected by Forester's body and you stood in plain sight."

After a pause, Peterschen said: "That's all right. Forget it."

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Doberon laughed softly.

"Hard to forget. You must live, Peterschen. Because, if you die, I'll have to report myself and take the consequences. You can't go about killing people and forgetting about it."

"I'll live," Peterschen assured him. "And that's just what I was trying to say. You loved her enough to do what I would have done. Nobody can understand what that means better than I can, you see! So you love her enough to buck your folks when needed. Don't blame yourself for this, either—I lost her weeks ago. She's written me that."

"I know," the officer admitted.

Doberon and Peterschen, different in races, backgrounds, education, but both Legionnaires, with the passions and the immense generosity of fighting men, of warriors! Men living outside the code of other people, men who refused to abide by its rules or to evoke it, for protection or vengeance!

There had been scores of witnesses, but they were men of the trade, soldiers.

Silence could be taken for granted, for all were of the Legion.

"Thirsty—" Peterschen said, later.

Doberon and Collin had left. The American held a cup to the wounded man's lips. Peterschen grunted with satisfaction."

"Three months in the hospital," he said softly, "and a couple of months of convalescence in Oran. You remember the jane in the gloveshop next to the hotel? I got a postal card from her ten days ago. The lieutenant couldn't understand it, so I didn't try to tell him. But I don't care any more. You know the way I am. Two or three months, and it's all over!" He chuckled in the darkness, and repeated, "All over."

"Better lie still," Forester advised. "You're feverish."

His hand reached for his comrade's forehead. Although the skin was dry and hot to the touch, there was moisture on his cheeks. Forester dried his fingers mechanically by rubbing them on his trousers. He laughed cheerfully.

"Sure, Karl, that's the way it goes. One lost, and along comes another. They're all alike to you, eh? What do you care?"

THE END

(Continued from page 59)

"I don't give a damn what it says there. That bloody mate calls me a liar and goes off to check the thing himself. But I'll take me dyin' oath I'm right. A man might forget a lot o' things, Cap'n, but there's one thing he don't ever forget. That's his army number. I done three years in the infantry back in 1914, and me number was 6960. You show me the old soldier that's forgotten his regimental number and I'll eat that there chart. As soon as I shined the torch on that there log I says '696. Tack a nought on to it and that's me, 6960 Private P. J. McMahon.' " He shook his fist indignantly. "And they try to tell me I didn't read the thing right!"

Johnstone thanked the little Irishman and let him go.

"Now then, Stark," he said. "What about my theory now?"

Stark shook his head sadly. "I'd like to think you were right, but McMahon's word isn't worth a damn. Besides, you're forgetting that I altered course. How could he know I wouldn't slow down?"

"Give him credit for a few brains. He's known you for eighteen months, time enough to find out all about your bull-headedways. The surest way to get you to keep going at full speed was to suggest slowing down. As for altering course, it was the only seaman-like thing to do—keep well clear of the submerged danger and haul up for the island in the hope of seeing it. If Walston's positions had been correct you *couldn't* have hit it."

Drumming nervously on the arms of his chair with shaking fingers Stark asked, "Do you think there's anything in this army number business?"

"I know there is." Captain Johnstone pressed the bell beside his desk. "My steward was in the army. We'll ask him."

There was nothing military in the bearing of the man who answered the bell. He was round-shouldered, paunchy and completely bald. His pallid face showed surprise when his captain asked, "What was your army number, Morton?"

"7296, sir." The answer was prompt. "Was there something you were wanting, sir?"

"No thanks, Morton. Captain Stark was just saying that a man couldn't be expected to remember his number for

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twenty or thirty years. I disagreed with him."

"You're right, sir," the steward said. "That's one thing a man don't *ever* forget."

He had scarcely left the room before Stark was on his feet. "You're right, Johnstone," he roared "Of course you're right." Color surged to his cheeks as he clamped his mouth and thrust out his jaw. It was like seeing a corpse come to life. Gone was the listless sagging of those big shoulders, gone was the vacant, hopeless stare. He banged his clenched fist down on the desk with a mighty crash. "It's barratry, by God! That damned Walston piled her up. He put that log back nearly three miles. He faked those positions. Called me! He never came near me. He made damn sure I wasn't called until you couldn't see half a ship's length ahead." This was the old Stark talking, arrogant, completely assured and full of fight.

"You see his game, Johnstone? He was going to hang the blame on me. On me! *You* know my reputation. Everyone knows it. In all the years I've been at sea I've never so much as scratched a bit of paint off my ship. Get Mr. Bloody Walston up here. I'll show him he can't put a thing like that over *me.*"

What a typical Stark outburst! How quickly he had recovered when he saw a means of clearing his name. His name and his precious reputation! Nothing else mattered. The loss of his ship meant nothing to him.

Captain Johnstone stood up. He had achieved what he set out to do. Instead of brokenly pleading guilty and taking the blame for everything Stark would now face the Court of Inquiry full of confidence. He'd sway his judges by the very force of his convictions.

Taking in the squared shoulders and grim expression on Stark's weather-beaten face, Captain Johnstone grinned broadly. The matter, he felt, was in good hands.

"I'm due on the bridge, Stark," he said. "I'll send Mr. Walston up here and you can use my cabin for the interview. All I ask is that you replace any furniture you break."

THE END

(Continued from page 49)

"Manuel!" she whispered.

He saw then that he lay near the *barrera* and that people watched. He could not be moved until the surgeon approved, and the man had not yet arrived.

"Juanito?" he said clearly.

And then his son was at Maria's side, and he could see the resemblance between them even more clearly now. The boy was more of her flesh than his; and thinking that, he supposed it was good, for she was one the like of which he had never found again.

"Sometimes," he said to Juanito, "stupidity is mistaken for bravery." He stopped the instant words with a wave of his hand. His body was dead from the waist down, and he wondered why the deadness had not crept higher.

His gaze went about the arena. People watched, silent, held by the drama of watching a man die. In a few moments they would be screaming again at another matador. They were fickle and bloodthirsty, and he had played to them for over half of his life.

He saw the bull and wished dimly he had not killed the beast. After all, it had had courage and it sought only to protect itself. And now it lay still and fly-enshrouded, waiting to be dragged away, a sacrifice to some pagan god without name or creed.

He saw the sword hilt still in the bull's shoulders, and his voice lashed out. "My sword, Jose," he said. "Bring it now, while I can still give it to my son."

"Manuel—" Maria began, and then she was still, slow tears still crowding her eyes.

He took the sword from Jose, seeing the hot blood running its length. "Blood me not in dishonor," he quoted in the silence and balanced the blade across his chest.

He saw the faces of his friends. He saw the eyes of strangers. He remembered the far-flung years of his life and remembered the tales of his father. His gaze went about the *Plaza del Toro,* and he could feel the slow creeping of death up his chest.

"My father gave me this and I give it to you," he said clearly to Juanito. "Each day you must look at it and follow its

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dictates. Do you swear that, over the body of a dying man?"

"I swear it," Juanito said.

Manuel looked at his wife, and his eyes were kind and remembering. She stared, wanting to hate him for what he was doing, and yet unable to.

And then, in the last surge of strength in his wide shoulders and cabled arms, he bent the blade.

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And Manuel, looking at his cut palms, suddenly laughed.

"Blood me not in dishonor," he whispered to Maria.

She cried softly, without sound, bending to him and taking his head and cradling it in her arms.

"Oh, Manuel!" she cried.

"Many bulls, *amigo!*" Jose said softly from a great distance.

And then deadness flowed softly upward, and death was satisfied for the moment with his task.

Manuel did not know when they carried him out. He did not know that horses dragged away the slain Belmonte at the same time. He slept eternally, half-smiling.

And overhead the crowd began its stamping and crying again. Chavez adjusted his cape and waited for the bull. The sun was sinking low, but bulls must be met and faced.

And Juanito, broken bloody sword in his hand, waited only a moment to see a raging bull come wheeling from the *toril.* Then he turned his back and paced to his mother's side.

"Toro, huh, huh, Toro!" the cry echoed to the darkening sky.

THE END

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